

REMEMBERING C. PARAMALINGAM

UNNOTICED BY THE NATION

My first encounter with Coach Param was as a rookie sports reporter with the Malay Mail in 1984.

I was assigned to do some run-up stories of the hockey team that was under the wings of Coach Param. The team was heading for the Los Angeles Olympic Games.



Tony Mariadass (left), Ian Pereira & Param, (right)

I still remember my first encounter with him. The moment I clasped his hand, he jokingly said: "You are shaking the hand that shook the world."

Little did I know what he meant by that then, but later learnt that those who had watched his feats as a player would call him "The man who shook the world."

He was among the rare breed of hockey players like

Freddy Vias, Lawrence Van Huizen, Ho Koh Chye, C. Thavanayagam, R. Yogeswaran, all of whom not only excelled as players but also as highly rated coaches.

He was also an all-rounder at Anglo Chinese School in Teluk Anson (now Teluk Intan) in the 1950s. Athletics was his first love. He ran the 100 yards in sub-11 seconds. He also shone in hockey, football, tennis, cricket and badminton.

Param, working with the town council in Teluk Anson, took up a technicians course in Johor Baru in 1955. He made his state debut in hockey for Johor.

He moved to Selangor in 1956 and went on to represent Selangor for 15 years. He also represented the nation from 1956 to 1968, playing in three Asian Games (1958, 1962 and 1966) and the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games.

Upon retiring from the game, he went into coaching and turned out for his second Olympics as coach at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics.

The pinnacle of his coaching career was handling the Asian All-Stars in their Asian and European tour of 1989.

Till today, no other Malaysian has had the honour of coaching the Asian All-Stars team.

From day one when I met him, he exuded friendliness, was down to earth and had no airs about himself, despite all his achievements.

He became a good friend and a fatherly figure to me. I was able to tap on his vast knowledge of the game and always got valuable quotes for my stories.

Param, who turned 91 on November 15th, never stopped giving back to the game until his health took a turn for the worst. Hockey was his life which he breathed. Param started playing hockey at the age of eight with a carved stick from a cherry tree, before his father bought him his first hockey stick.

Param, was named National Coach of the Year in 1999, had helmed the then Malaysian Hockey Federation coaching and selection committees.

While he gave so much back to the sport, the nation failed to recognise his immense contributions.

BY TONY MARIADASS (SPORTSWRITER)