

REMEMBERING C. PARAMALINGAM

GENTLE AND KIND

Chelliah Paramalingam was both a coach and a gentleman.

He was very likeable, jovial and his trademark smile endeared him to one and all.

Also known as "Charlie" Paramalingam, I came to know him as a rookie sportswriter 47 years ago. It was at a national hockey training camp. I was nervous when I approached him.

He greeted me with his unforgettable warmth and made me feel totally at ease.

He was soft spoken and continually flashed his famous smile. His patience in trying to make the rookie in me understand his efforts at whipping the national team into shape was to say the least, gratifying.

That was the beginning not just of a professional but also a personal relationship.

I would meet up with him often at other training camps in my journalistic career and he remained the same kind and gentle mannered person.

His persona as a coach reached heights of

extreme affection from those he coached.

I visited coach Param sometime in the middle of this year with another of his hockey mates, M.P. Haridas, when we heard he was unwell.

He was in high spirits despite his health conditions and we spent time reminiscing over those good old hockey days.

Just three months earlier, 25 of his ex national and state players visited him. His daughter Samila told us how overjoyed he was on that occasion.

They reminded coach Param of how much of a father figure he had been to them. Indeed, to many that was what he was, a father figure.

It was perhaps a highlight of coach Param's involvement in hockey that his former players went on to organise the C. Paramalingam Legend Trophy tournament.

Coach Param represented both Selangor and Malaysia as a player. Originally from Teluk Intan, Perak, he moved to Selangor in 1956 and represented the state for 15 years.

He was an all-rounder in sport, having played cricket, football, tennis and

badminton before making his name in hockey.

Interestingly, he is the only Malaysian to have coached the Asian All-Stars of 1989 on their Asian and European tours.

In 2014 he was inducted into the Olympic Council of Malaysia's Hall of Fame.

One can say that having passed away at 91, coach Param had a long innings.

Hockey owes him a huge debt of gratitude. For sure he has etched his name in the annals of Malaysian hockey and for years to come, he will be remembered as a legend who inspired many to follow in his footsteps.

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