

# HOCKEY TO YOGA

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**I**T was easy to miss his presence at gatherings. R. Ramakrishnan, despite his star status as a national hockey player, was always the one who shunned the limelight.

He was content to let his exploits on the field be the defining aspect of his life.

No loud boasts, no recapping of moments when he brought glory to Malaysia.

The fact is, Rama was a man of few words.

Humble might have well been his other name.

He was content to be left alone, content to let Rama the hockey star be distinct from his persona as just plain Rama.

The one time you heard him get excited was when he talked about yoga. He was very much into it and never failed to encourage others to indulge in it as a hobby.

Otherwise, it was about what types of food to keep you healthy.

I met Rama at a national hockey training camp in the early days of my career as a sportswriter. We would go on to become fast friends, keeping in touch via the phone, though our friendship suffered a lapse around the time his wife passed away.

We reconnected and met up sometime late last year for tea in Petaling Jaya and Rama looked fit with his hair visibly whiter.

Rama did not have a wide circle of friends. He kept it to a small group and I think this bordered on his principled stand on issues and life itself.

He had no time particularly for those who indulged in double-speak.



Perhaps this also had something to do with his legal background. It is sad he won't be around to share some tea time with me again.

What is clear though is, he has left behind a rich legacy of hockey memories for us to savour. From being a small town boy - grew up in Teluk Intan - Rama went on to carve his name on the national hockey stage.

Rama was the player who always made a difference on the pitch no matter at what level he was playing.

His cool demeanour was the hallmark of his character as a player. He bounced back quickly from setbacks and learnt from mistakes just as quickly.

He was the type of player every young talent should strive to emulate. Every time Malaysian hockey is discussed, be assured R. Ramakrishnan would not be left out of it.

He might not have wanted it this way, but history has its way of recording greatness.

In this regard, Rama was right up there with the best of the best in Malaysian hockey. RIP my friend. You have done well. You will be missed.