

REMEMBERING C. PARAMALINGAM

HE TOUCHED ME

He was a man loved, respected, and decorated both as a national hockey player and coach.

To many, he was more than a sports figure — he was a fatherly mentor, teacher, and friend whose humility and dedication left a lasting mark on Malaysian hockey.

I first met him in 1987 as a rookie reporter, when he was head coach of the Klang Municipal Council team in the inaugural Malaysia Hockey League (MHL). He was a frail-looking man in his late 50s, but his big, cheeky smile immediately stood out.

I knew little about him beyond the fact that he had been an Olympian of distinction. Yet he treated me with the same respect as he did with the senior sports journalists. There were no airs about him.

That encounter was the beginning of a friendship, which grew stronger as the years went by.

Param's journey in hockey began as a national player, culminating in his proud representation of Malaysia at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. His skill and sportsmanship earned admiration from teammates and opponents alike,

cementing his place among the stalwarts of his era.

In 1989, he was named Asian All Stars coach, gaining respect from international players. The following year, he was appointed as national juniors coach. In 1993, he led Malaysia's juniors to the Junior World Cup in Barcelona. Despite a disappointing finish, Param spoke candidly about the team's shortcomings:

"Our preparation for the Barcelona event was poor. Though we had many talented players we failed to match up with the others."

After Barcelona, Param stepped away from national duties and devoted himself to nurturing young talent at the state and club level. He coached Klang MC, Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, and later Bank Simpanan Nasional (BSN). Under his guidance, BSN won three overall MHL titles between 1999 and 2002, as well as the league championship in 1999. That same year, he was honoured as Coach of the Year.

Param believed deeply in the importance of developing hockey beyond the elite level. He often reminded journalists that they shared the duty of giving grassroots

hockey a voice in the mainstream media:

"Development of the game is crucial and needs as much publicity as the elite level. The Media has the power to highlight shortcomings in the system and help bring about changes."

His openness, humility, and willingness to share insights shaped not only players but also the way the sport was covered and understood. He remained approachable, never shying away from criticism, and always ready to mentor those around him.

For me Param was more than a coach. He was a motivator, a patient teacher, and a man who was readily to chat about hockey. His passion inspired many to love the game and to see beyond victories and defeats.

He will be remembered not only for his achievements on the field but for his enduring spirit off it. His legacy lives on in the players he nurtured, the clubs he strengthened, and the countless lives he touched with his wisdom and kindness — including mine.

S.RAMAGURU
(SPORTSWRITER)

