

REMEMBERING C. PARAMALINGAM

WHAT TIME COULDN'T ERASE



When news came that C. Paramalingam had passed, I realised how memory works in its own quiet, selective way. I could not summon every detail of our conversations, nor recall precise dates or places beyond a few fixed moments.

But what remained clear — unmistakably so — was how he made people feel. And in that, his legacy endures.

I first met Paramalingam ahead of the 1983 SEA Games in Singapore. It was an unremarkable encounter on the surface, professional and brief, the sort that journalists and coaches have countless times over a career.

But during the Games themselves, hockey was my assigned beat, and our paths crossed often. In the daily rhythm of matches, Press briefings and informal exchanges, familiarity grew — not forced, not rushed, but organic.

What stood out about Paramalingam was his ease. He was

approachable without being casual, authoritative without being distant. In an era when some coaches guarded information as if it were State secrets, he was open in his engagement.

He spoke plainly, constructively, and never with condescension. There was confidence in his knowledge, and he did not feel the need to mask it behind defensiveness.

Over the years, we met several more times. Life moved on, careers took their turns, and memory inevitably blurred the specifics. But the relationship matured into something more profound than routine professional interaction.

There was mutual respect — the kind that does not need constant affirmation. He knew I understood the game, that my questions and opinions came from a place of familiarity and sincerity, not provocation.

And in return, I understood the weight he carried as a national coach, the pressures unseen by those outside the team circle.

Paramalingam never dismissed differing views. He listened. He explained. He corrected when necessary, but always constructively. That trait alone sets him apart. Respect, after all, is not about agreement — it is about recognising intent.

And he recognised mine.

What I remember most clearly is not a particular match or quote, but his demeanour. Easygoing, yes — but not casual about standards.

Friendly, but never frivolous. There was a quiet professionalism in how he carried himself, a steadiness that reflected both his character and his commitment to the sport.

Perhaps this is how friendships rooted in shared purpose endure. They do not require constant contact or detailed recollection. They live instead in impressions, in tone, in how one person acknowledges another.

Paramalingam acknowledged people — players, journalists, colleagues — as part of the same ecosystem, each with a role to play.

In remembering him now, I accept that I do not recall everything. But I remember enough. I remember respect freely given, professionalism without pretence, and a man who treated dialogue as something to be built, not defended.

And that, more than any detail, is what deserves to be remembered.

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