

REMEMBERING RICHARD VELU

AFFABLE VELU

IT was kind of R. Velu to forgive me for playing dumb the first time we met.

On August 31, 1980, the Selangor Cycling Association race coincided with Kajang's National Day celebrations.

Despite reading his New Straits Times sports writing, I had never met Velu.

After seeing my Bernama Press tag, Velu greeted me at the large tent opposite the Kajang Police Headquarters. There were only two race reporters.

He quipped: "Ah Bernama's here, so everybody will get the story."

It was embarrassing to explain that I had never covered a bike race or travelled to Kajang, boarding the Foh Hup green bus from Puduraya the night before with housemates' help. I didn't know the difference between the numerous events.

Velu gave me a cursory description of the races, but I felt horrible because I hadn't told him I was there to support my fiancée (whom I married six years later) in the 10km road race.

With advice from cycling icon Shahrudin Jaafar, she won

for Selangor over Johor, Melaka, and the Federal Territory.

Velu left Balai Berita when I joined Berita Harian in early 1982 and moved to Kota Bharu.

We reunited when he and George Das formed Brickfields sports PR agency ProSports. At Bangkok Palace Hotel, he covered the 1985 Bangkok SEA Games for The New Straits Times Press (NSTP).

My 1989 transfer to Johor Bahru cut into our time together, but our late suppers outside our hotel helped me get to know him.

My only previous encounters with him were during a November 2024 meeting at the FMT Media headquarters in Petaling Jaya and the December 9, 2024 Sports Flame event at the Concorde Hotel Kuala Lumpur.

As in our first meeting 43 years ago, he told me at the FMT Media headquarters: "Hisham, you're one of the few who call me Retina Velu."

His polite, soft-spoken, and pleasant nature will always be remembered.



BY HISHAMUDDIN AUN