



FOUGHT TILL WE DROPPED



BY BRIAN STAMARIA

IT WAS IN THE SEMIFINAL MATCH AGAINST INDIA. TEN MINUTES TO THE FINAL WHISTLE, DEFENDER A FRANCIS LIMPED OUT WITH A RECURRING RIGHT THIGH INJURY.

I was already tensed, and my hands cold, watching the team from the bench.

Without any warmup, I was shoved into action. I was a little panicky as I found myself thrust into a

of the game, I foiled an attempt. Tried to push the ball out of play. There was a melee around the "D", and the Indians won a short corner.

Being the first runner out of the post, the short corner attempt was thwarted.

There was an infringement, and they immediately were awarded another corner.

Running out quickly, I was just about a foot away from



"hot game". Tension was high.

However, I was ready no matter what and proud to be playing for my country.

I was lucky to have skipper Sri Shan. He gave me good cover.

We were, at that time, holding off the Indians with a narrow 2-1 lead. It was a very high-strung match. The Indians were foraging to find an equaliser. I managed to control my nerves within a couple of minutes.

India's V.J. Phillips was menacing on the right flank, and I had to keep him at bay. Just in the dying minutes

Aslam Sher Khan. Before my stick could sweep the ball away, Aslam struck. The ball went under my right arm into the goal. They equalised!

The game went into extratime. The Indians got the better of us with a 3-2 victory in a very close-contested match.

It was devastating. The whole team felt so disheartened. We lost not because we did not try. We felt that we had let down the thousands of Malaysians who came out to support us.

Even after 50 years, I can still feel the emotions of that loss.

Brian Sta Maria (left) & R. Patmarajah.