

GLORY, HEARTBREAK AND PRIDE

BY **A. SUBRAMANIAM**

MEMORIES comprise some indelible moments. You can keep reliving it as long as you live. The 1975 Hockey World Cup in Kuala Lumpur is one.

What a tournament, and what a team Malaysia had. I don't think we have had one like it since then. Sure, Malaysia only finished fourth, but what a performance the team put up.

Rewind to the morning of Mar 11, 1975. I skipped school to be at the Kilat Club. It was the last preliminary round match, pitting Malaysia against Holland for a spot in the semis.

The brilliance of Poon Fook Loke and his field goal put Malaysia ahead. Then, Ties Kruize, the man whose skills at penalty corners were legendary, levelled the score.

Then came the moment that is etched on all our minds. A push-in by Franco de Cruz saw captain and fullback Sri Shanmuganathan nail the winner just two minutes from the time.

The roar that emanated at the Kilat Club could be heard a mile away. The tournament was a schoolboy's dream. Other than our own stars, we saw upfront the likes of Kruize,



Manzoor-Ul Hassan of Pakistan and Stefan Otulakowski of Poland.

Three years after the tournament, I got to shake hands with Fook Loke, Sri Shan, M. Mahendran, Phang Poh Meng, Brian Sta Maria, R. Ramakrishnan and Khairuddin Zainal, the goalkeeper, among the others, as a sportswriter.

It was a dream come true.

G.Vijayanathan, who umpired the final between India and Pakistan, would become a good friend.

The tournament was marred by bad weather and I remember one match was shifted midway to the TPCA Stadium in Jalan Raja Muda.

We made a quick rush by bus to the Stadium to watch the conclusion. I was involved in a number of other tournaments hosted by Malaysia, but none came close to capturing those moments of pure magic that the 1975 World Cup threw up.

Looking back, until today, I always wonder why so many of those in Ho Koh Chye's team sported long hair, with Fook Loke the standout player!