

GUIDED BY SENIORS

BY R. RAMA KRISHNAN

AFTER MISSING THE PENALTY STROKE IN THE OPENING MATCH AGAINST NEW ZEALAND, I WAS DOWN AND OUT OF FOCUS FOR A WHILE. FORTUNATELY, MY BIG BROTHERS – A FRANCIS, M MAHENDRAN, FRANCO D' CRUZ AND ROOMMATE S BALASINGAM – PULLED ME OUT OF MY DOWNCAST.

They spurred me on with encouragement, which helped me regain my composure, and I got back into the game.

The Kiwi defence played a very tight game, preventing us any room at goal.

Those four senior teammates mentioned above, with their vast experience and knowledge, not only guided me but were a significant influence on me throughout the tournament.

Being the youngest in the team, they encouraged, moulded and protected me.

To this day, I am ever so grateful to them.

As the tournament progressed and due to injuries to some players, coach Ho Koh Chye was forced to play a different formation from the traditional pyramid system.

Thus, players were switched from their positions, like



Mahendran moving from right to left wing.

With Franco playing a more defensive inside role, I was given a role to mark and cut out certain key opposing players.

In our group, we had 1971 World Cup champions Pakistan (1971) and Holland (1973). Our modified system of play worked very well, wherein we lost to Pakistan by a solitary penalty corner goal and went on to beat the defending champions Holland (2-1).

That victory enabled us to qualify for the semifinal against India.

In the semifinal, when we entered the Merdeka stadium and saw the crowd support, that boosted our confidence. That extra boost also assisted us in pushing the team to play our system well, and it worked well until the LAST

FIVE MINUTES of the game.

Sadly, we allowed India to score a penalty corner to equalise when we led by 2-1. We then lost the game in the extra time 3-2.

I am proud to say that this team has played three of their best games since the 1972 Munich Olympics.



(From left): N. Palanisamy, Franco D'Cruz, Poon Fook Loke, R.Rama Krishnan, Len Oliverio, R. Pathmarajah, Khairuddin Zainal, K. Ba;asingam, Wong Choon Hin, A Francis, N Sri Shanmuganathan, Phang Poh Meng, M Mahendran, Zain Azarai, S Balasingam,, Brian Sta Maria.