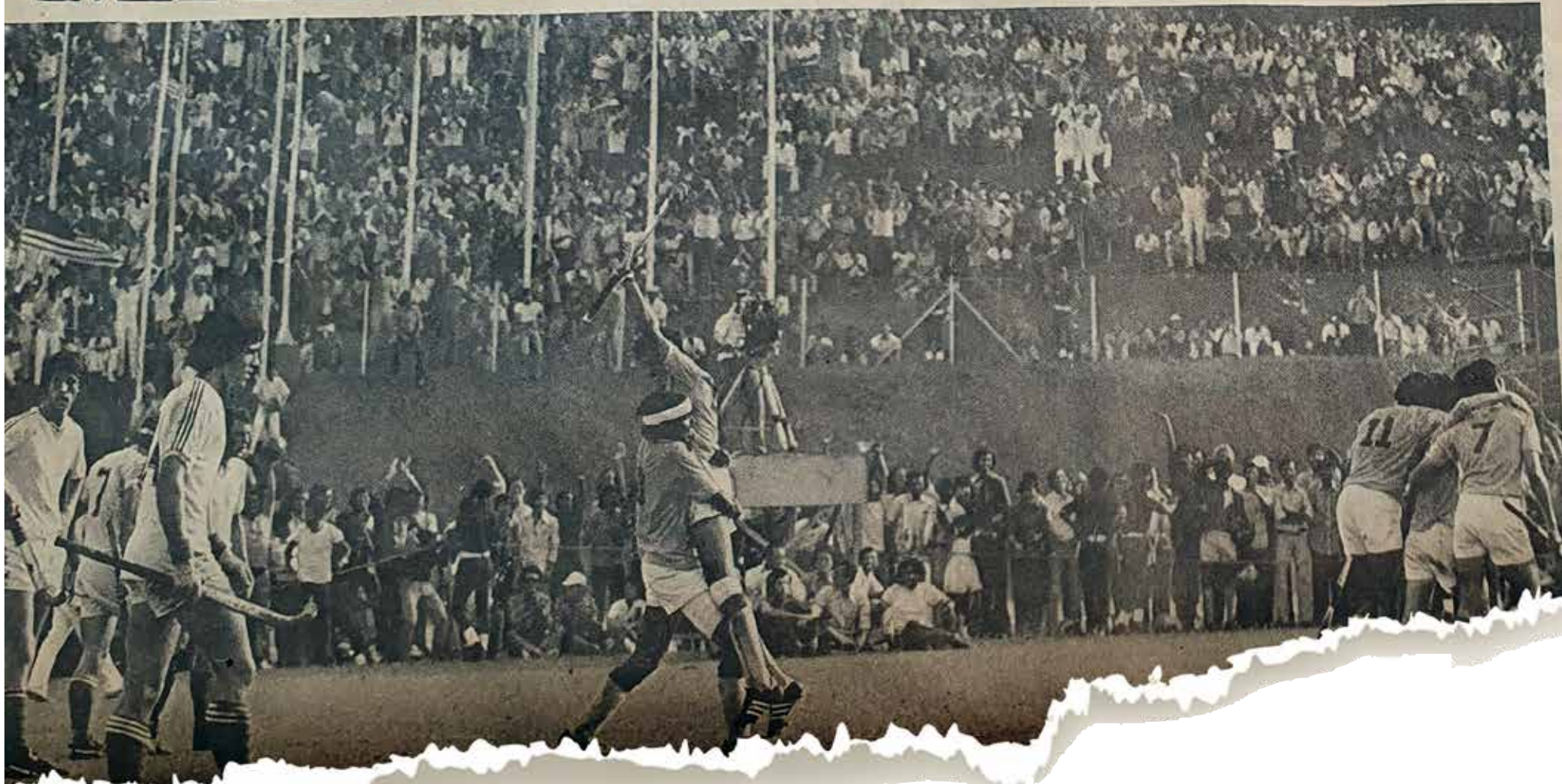


SO GLAD TO HAVE STAYED BACK

BY POONFOOK LOKE



FOOK LOKE ONE, SHAN TWO, MALAYSIA THERE



I had already planned to leave for my further studies in England in September after The Asian Games 1974 in Teheran.

I had to put it on hold as the 3rd World Cup 1975 in Kuala Lumpur took precedence, and I only left for England in September 1975.

My entrance to pursue my university degree was delayed by a year. But I had no regrets as the time was needed to be spent on the team's preparation for the World Cup.

I still have vivid memories of all the games. My team members will agree that the most significant moments of the tournament for Malaysia were against Holland and the semifinal with India.

Just before the last group match with Holland, the short, clear and precise message that I recorded in my head following the manager/coaches/players meeting was: "We have to beat Holland at all costs if we want to play in the semifinals".

My first encounter playing against Holland was at the 7-Nations International Hockey Tournament in Christchurch in February 1974. While warming up before that game, I can still remember our goalkeeper Khairuddin persistently reminding us, "... tolong, tolong, jangan bagi short corners".

I was told then to watch out for Ties Kruize, an established short corner specialist who was the top scorer in the 2nd World Cup 1973 in Amsterdam.

Even before our match (in Christchurch), Ties had already scored eight goals in Holland's last three games. We lost narrowly by a goal (0-1) through a penalty

stroke converted by Ties.

My second meeting with Holland, which we lost again (1-2), was in early January 1975 in Barcelona.

As for this third meeting with Holland in the final group match, I was confident that with our solid teamwork and playing on the Kilat field (our training ground), we were ready to take them on. Furthermore, I had "studied" both their goalkeepers' mobilities. It was evident we were attacking in waves after the bully off.

The first goal I scored was from "instinctive teamwork" when Franco put a through-pass ball (to me) through the legs of the last defender. The ball caught his foot, and when the French umpire was about to blow for the short corner, I lifted the ball over the head of the onrushing goalkeeper and made it to the goal.

Thankfully, the umpire played the advantage rule.

Holland equalised in the second half through a penalty stroke taken by Ties. We won eventually when skipper Shan scored from a short corner with about 30 seconds left on the clock.

The other big moment for the record was when Malaysia took on India in the semifinals. Another big drama. We were leading 1-0, and when India equalised. Shan scored to lead again by 2-1 with about five minutes remaining. India suddenly made a substitution and brought in a fresh fullback, Aslam Sher Khan.

Shortly after, India was awarded a short corner, and Aslam Sher scored. The game went into extratime, and India finally won by 3-2. The rest is history.

