

A portrait of Richard Velu, a middle-aged man with glasses, wearing a dark suit jacket over a light blue striped shirt. He is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. The background is a dark, textured surface with some geometric patterns.

REMEMBERING RICHARD VELU

RICHARD VELU [though I knew him better as R Velu, his byline in the Star, NST and Sports Mirror] had to fill some big shoes as a specialist writer on track and field.

In English-language newspapers, Norman Siebel's shadow towered over sports journalists—for his language, writing style, and news sense, not the least of which was in athletics.

After his passing, Siebel's masterful writings were the gold standard for all aspiring sports journalists.

Among my first instructions when I joined the NST in 1979 was: "Go to the library and read Siebel's reportage and writings. You could learn something there."

There I was, the rookie, stepping up to the plate after three years at The Star and coming into the orbit of Mansoor Rahman, Cheryl Dorall, Tony Francis, George Das, P'ng Hong

Kwang, Gabriel Lim, Bernard Lim, and of course R Velu.

All of the above is to paint in the background on which I concluded that Velu did, in time, surpass Siebel in track and field reporting.

In my mind, Velu plumbed the depths and cast his net far and wide to bring the heart and soul of athletics to his readers.

Each piece, from personality profiles to controversies to meet reportage, was worth reading.

He didn't bore the reader with technical stuff—he stuck to telling stories simply and effectively without overusing flowery phrases [the beloved colour of so many would-be writers] which made them flowing good reads.

The athletics landscape was never the same after he left sportswriting in the early 80s.

VELU WROTE
FOR THE
READER

BY PETER MARTINEZ