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Paul, the nation thanks you

Acknowledging the service and passion of one man who gave some 30 years of his life to football

WHILE we have not forgotten many of our former athletes and the glory that they brought to the country, the same can also be said of sports officials who lived through their lives for their passion in sports.

There are some who still look fit as a fiddle despite their age while others are suffering from chronic diseases and conditions.

One such marvellous sports administrator character who is "down" is Datuk Seri Paul Mony Samuel, the former Asian Football Confederation (AFC), Asean Football Federation (AFF) and Football Association of Malaysia (FAM) general secretary, who is a well-respected figure in the administration of the football world.

After clocking almost 30 years in football, Paul Mony is now suffering from Parkinson's disease, a degenerative disorder of the central nervous system which often impairs the sufferer's motor skills and speech.

A man who used to take thousands of steps just to ensure that everything was in order in the organisation of matches in stadiums and nearby fields is now confined to a wheelchair.

It is sad that Parkinson's has crawled into Paul Mony's life; he also has trouble recognising friends and loved ones including his family and beautiful wife Kristine, as well as son, Andrew, who shares his dad's love for sports.

We all well aware too that the world's greatest boxer Cassius Clay, who later changed his name to Muhammad Ali, and once floated like a butterfly and stung like a bee in the ring, has been equally floored by Parkinson's disease.

I was 19 years old when I landed my first job at FAM, which was by sheer chance. I attended an interview at ProSports Management, owned by former sports journalist George Albert Das. After the interview, George said to me, "I'll take you to FAM and we'll meet Paul."

To cut a long story short, I got the job, then ventured on my own after 10 years. I must confess that working with FAM under Paul Mony was one of the most memorable moments of my life.

Paul Mony was born in Kuala Ketil, Kedah



Paul Mony (seated, third from left) with FIFA president Sepp Blatter (seated, fourth from left) at the Goal Programme Seminar in 2005.

where he received his education at St Theresa's Primary School before moving on to Ibrahim Secondary School. He then furthered his studies at Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (now Universiti Putra Malaysia).

He is always remembered as one of the sports administrators with distinctive quality; a no-nonsense character who speaks his mind without fear or favour. He is also a very kind-hearted man who used to render any kind of help to the hundreds who sought his help as far as football was concerned. That explains why he is the longest-serving FAM general secretary – from 1984 to 2000. Malaysia was ranked 93 in the world when Paul Mony was in FAM and today we are at the 171 spot!

Paul Mony is duly recognised by football's world governing body FIFA as a capable instructor, serving on its panel of instructors from 1991 to 2007, where he conducted FUTURO I & II courses throughout the world and wrote the first administration book for FIFA in 1988.

An ardent admirer of Brazilian football leg-

end Pele and German great Franz Beckenbauer, Paul Mony's love affair with football started when he was a regular player in a Premier League club in Kedah in the 1960s before taking on a coaching job with the club for seven years.

An active hand on administrative matters, Paul Mony is well-known for his organisational skills. He was appointed to the AFC Competitions Committee (1986 to 2002), during which time he was involved in the successful organisation of the Dynasty Cup, the Asian Cup and the Confederations Cup.

He was also a member of the FIFA Organising Committee for Olympic football tournaments for two years and participated in the FIFA Technical Study Groups in 1991 (China), 1995 (Iran) and 2002 (India).

Paul Mony also played a major role in the implementation of the World Youth Championship in Nigeria in 1999.

The feather in his cap has to be his involvement in four World Cups, which is considered by many as the ultimate test of administrative and logistical skills.

His effective leadership was proved as he successfully managed the World Cup in the USA (1994), France (1998), Korea/Japan (2002) and Germany (2006).

The only other Malaysian who is keeping the Malaysian flag flying high now is Datuk

Windsor John Paul, the acting general secretary of Asian Football Confederation. He was personally groomed by Paul Mony in his early days at FAM.

In 2007, Paul Mony was bestowed Sports Leadership Award by the Raja Permaisuri Agong and in 2015, he was awarded the AFF Lifetime Achievement award by Pahang ruler Sultan Ahmad Shah.

A strong advocate for building up the sport in this region, Paul Mony has also been instrumental in the revival of the Asean Football Federation in 1995. He also sits on the FIFA Panel of Instructors (Organisation and Administration), where he has successfully conducted administration courses for FIFA in more than 25 countries in Asia.

Another feather to his football cap is his appointment as FIFA development officer for the Goal Project in September 2000-September 2005.

The FIFA Goal Project is an initiative by FIFA to assist countries around the world to construct their very own "House of Football" and technical facilities for the development and continuous progress of football activities in 26 countries

A teacher by training, Paul Mony holds an Advanced Coaching Certificate from FAM, an International Coaching Certificate from the UK and the FIFA/AFC Coaching Diploma.

He attributes his success in the field to his personal work philosophy, which revolves around relationships built on trust.

"My ambition in life is to build meaningful and proactive relationships and create a sense of bonhomie among the people around me.

"I hate unpleasantness and I believe relationships based on trust go a much longer way than anything else," he once said.

Paul Mony's successful steering of his soccer related career is a testament to the truth of his beliefs.

Thank you Datuk Seri Paul Mony Samuel for your wonderful service to the country and also to this beautiful game called football.

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