

Estate Chronicles: A football field of dreams

By [Ravindran Raman Kutty](#) - April 2, 2023 @ 7:20am



The seven a-side tournament was a milestone event in the estate. FILE PIC

AT the entrance of our estate, amid the tall flamboyant flame of forest trees, there was a well-manicured football field.

This green patch — 150m by 80m — was maintained by the estate management; the cow grass was cut with a tractor.

This field was shared with the Tamil school located about 5m away from the field.

The field became busy on two occasions: our monthly open-air movie nights with Shaw Brothers, and football, mainly our seven-a-side tournaments.

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The football field would be mowed by the estate management a week before; black tar lines would be drawn outside the field to indicate the barriers, the D-box and penalty areas.

The goalposts would be affixed with a net, and the surrounding areas cleaned, making the fiesta setting all the more alluring and interesting.

A makeshift tent would be set up with a public announcement (P/A) system. Refreshments for the referees and officials would be prepared, and the huge shiny trophies were proudly arranged on a neatly cloth-covered table.

The seven-a-side tournament was where the best teams from Puchong, Shah Alam, Sri Petaling and Sungai Besi (Salak South), comprising eager youths, would come together to battle for the trophies.

The Challenge Trophy was usually returned to the organisers after it was kept by the winning team for about a month.

This was the source of inspiration and motivation for the players and the main focus of young boys, including yours truly, whose minds would be filled with dreams of having one of these trophies as their very own.

The day started as early as 8am The teams would arrive from 8.30am onwards.

Teams from nearby towns or areas would come on bicycles, with much anticipation of our rivals from the neighbouring Kinrara Estate.

Those who were further from us would come on motorcycles. The players assembled in their teams and changed into their jerseys.

The varied colours of their jerseys, further brightened by the goalkeepers' outfits, were a joyous sight for everyone.

Although only a few players could afford football boots, every player came with the utmost determination to play and win, barefoot and all.

The organisers would wait till 9.30am.

Once there was a good number of teams, they would do the match draws; if there was an odd number of teams, one would receive a by – a much thanked privilege to skip the first round and go to the second round.

The referee blew his whistle and the tournament commenced.

The strong, the weak, the rough, the tough, the fast, the agile, the stylish – everything was displayed on the field, keeping the audience on the edge of their seats.

The rigorous motions of the players would keep everyone glued to their seats, although most of the spectators could hardly sit still with such excitement.

Fights, too, were not unusual. In fact, everyone watching would anticipate fights as that would make the tournament an event to remember; the cheer at the end of the fight would be a loud indication to the players as a "thank you" for providing entertainment, and a boost to the referees and coaches for dispersing the fight.

The final match was always a worthy watch. More so when our estate team was in the finals.



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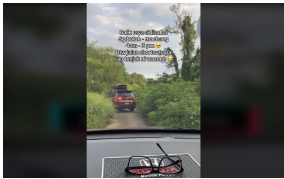
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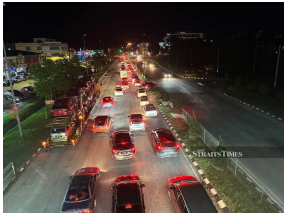
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The estate workers would join the spectators on their way back from work, making the roaring crowd even greater than the Merdeka cheer.

The final game was always a nail-biting experience. Being a budding goalkeeper myself at that time, the goalkeepers' antics would always fascinate me.

The strikers were remembered for their outstanding goals, while the injured would also be remembered for their dramatic moves and worrying wounds.

The winning goal, especially if by our estate team, would receive the most thunderous claps and a vociferous roar.

The tournament would normally end by 3pm to 4pm. The organising chairman or the estate manager would conduct the prize-giving ceremony.

The finale would see the winners receiving their trophies and the challenge trophy amid a grand roar and congratulatory applause from the entire estate and other estate dwellers who had come to watch the game.

This one-day extravaganza made every little boy in the estate run and kick a ball; every boy in the estate grew up alongside football dreams, imagining himself scoring amazing goals with the roaring cheer of spectators watching his wonderful feat.

The seven a-side tournament was a milestone event in the estate.

It showcased the strength of local football teams, the exceptional organisational skills among the estate heads and leaders, the efficient communication skills among the teams and estates without the presence of the telephone, and the permanent impact of football on the young boys who aspired to be footballers in the days to come.

The tournaments were the event of the year, and Bukit Jalil was no exception.

The next instalment of the Estate Chronicles will be published in a fortnight

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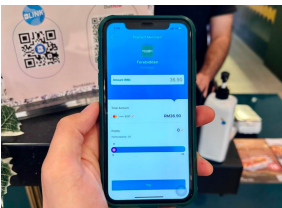
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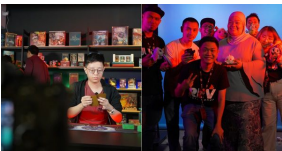


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