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A long walk with famous sons

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HISTORY has it that football was the first sport introduced at the Sultan Abdul Hamid College in Alor Star.

At that time, 1908 to be precise, the game was introduced by the school's founder, the late Mohamad Iskandar, with the aim of keeping students away from their favourite pastime - gambling by the roadside.

Since its founding, the school has gone on to make great strides in achieving sporting and academic excellence.

College, as the school is popularly known, is one of the few schools which needs no introduction.

It has not only produced two of the country's Prime Ministers but also a host of top sportsmen.

The list of politicians who studied in College include the country's first Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra, current premier Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, and First Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin.

It would be interesting to note that Mohamad Iskandar was Dr Mahathir's father.

The most famous sports personality would undoubtedly be Datuk Azhar Mansor who completed a historic solo sailing voyage round the world.

In line with their tradition of excelling in all fields, including sports, sports secretary K. Segeran Nair said a four-year sports development programme was introduced.

Under the programme, a select group of coaches have been entrusted with identifying talents and moulding them into top sportsmen.

Segeran said the programme has succeeded in producing immediate results in the very first year in rugby, cricket, football and athletics.

The programme strengthened the cricket team who have been the State Schools champions the past four years while several of their rugby players and athletes have gone on to represent the country.

"This is just the first phase of our programme. Our aim is to be the best in all sports at the schools level within the next three years.

"I believe we can achieve this target with the pool of dedicated and experienced coaches that we have," Segeran said.

How well they use the facilities available has also contributed to their sporting success.

He said the school had most of the basic facilities like a good field for football, rugby and athletics training.

For hockey, the team train at an artificial pitch which is privately run while the tennis and swimming teams also train elsewhere.

Training outside the schools means additional cost but Segeran said they are lucky to have good support from the Sultan Abdul Hamid Old Collegians Association (Sahoca).

The Sultan of Kedah is Sahoca patron while Dr Mahathir is president.

Said Segeran, "The Sahoca members not only help us financially but are actively involved in helping us train our sportsmen.

"In fact our cricket team is coached by two former collegians who used to play for the State."

"They sacrifice their free time to coach the school teams."

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