

# PINNACLES OF TRIUMPH



TUN AHMAD SARJI

*Memoirs*

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TUN AHMAD SARJI

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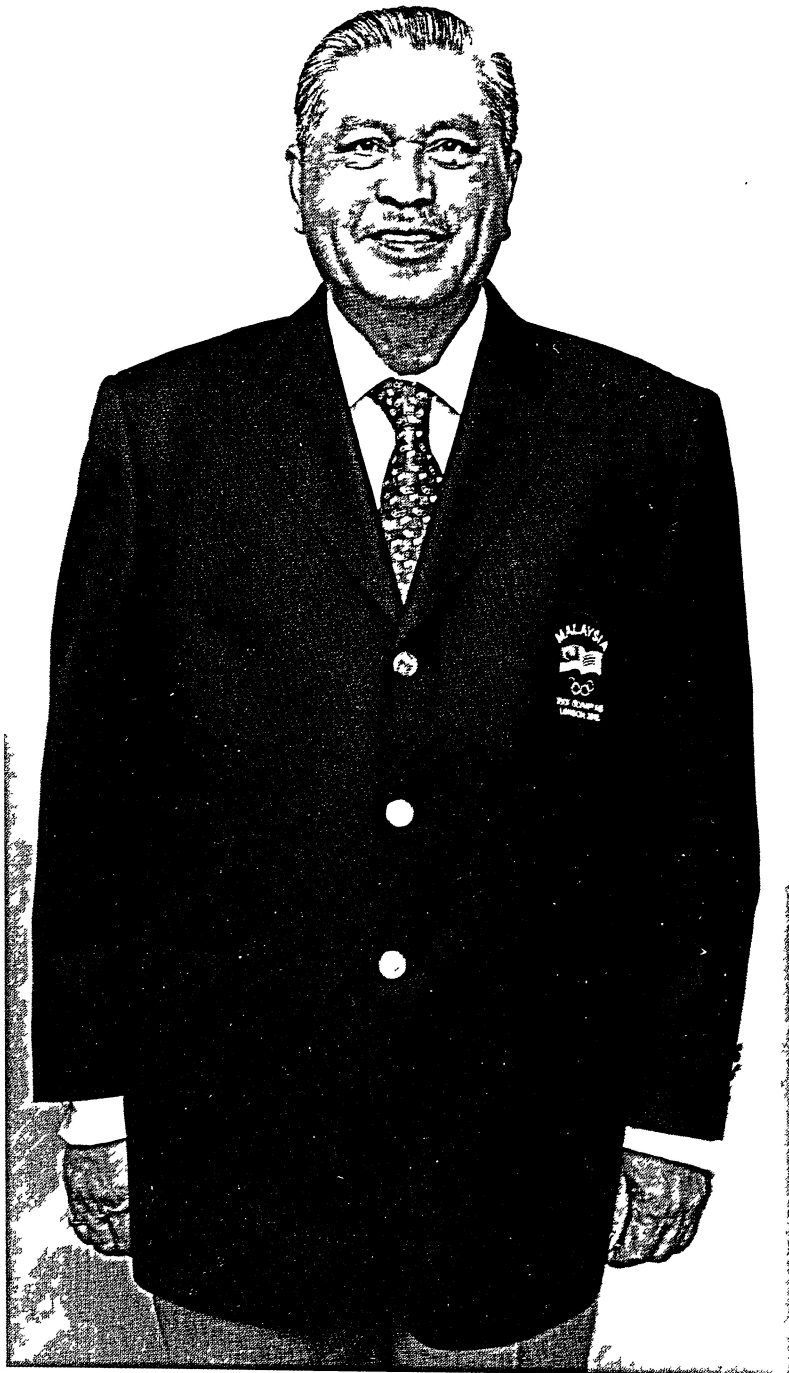
*Memoirs*



PUSTAKA PERDANA



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*Tun Ahmad Sarji (2012 photo).*

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# *Dedication*



I am eternally grateful to my wife  
Sagiyah binti Salikin  
for giving her support to my sporting activities,  
as well as the childrens', to enable us to reach  
some pinnacles of triumph.  
This book is therefore dedicated to her.

# Introduction

From my teens, inspired by my father, I have loved sports, if not every sport, but many. To some I have been introduced quite late in life, yet have, nonetheless, as player or official, taken up with a young man's passion.

Sports has been a way of balancing an active mind with a healthy body, as a way of engaging, quite as much companionably as well as competitively, with people and bridging the gap between generations.

It needs a word of explanation why I have written these memoirs, devoted exclusively to sports. Sports have mattered to me, and sports matter to our nation, for good cause. By definition, great sportsmen are men of action and not warriors of words. I need to record their achievements, which provide a beacon and a source of inspiration for those who come after them.

I dedicate this work to all the sportsmen and sportswomen in lawn bowls, cricket and golf, who have given Malaysia reason to be proud of their pinnacles of triumph, and also to the many 'officials' who have helped and guided me in my intervention and role in sports.

**Tun Ahmad Sarji**

**July 2016**

## *chapter 1*

# **Skipper Hamid**

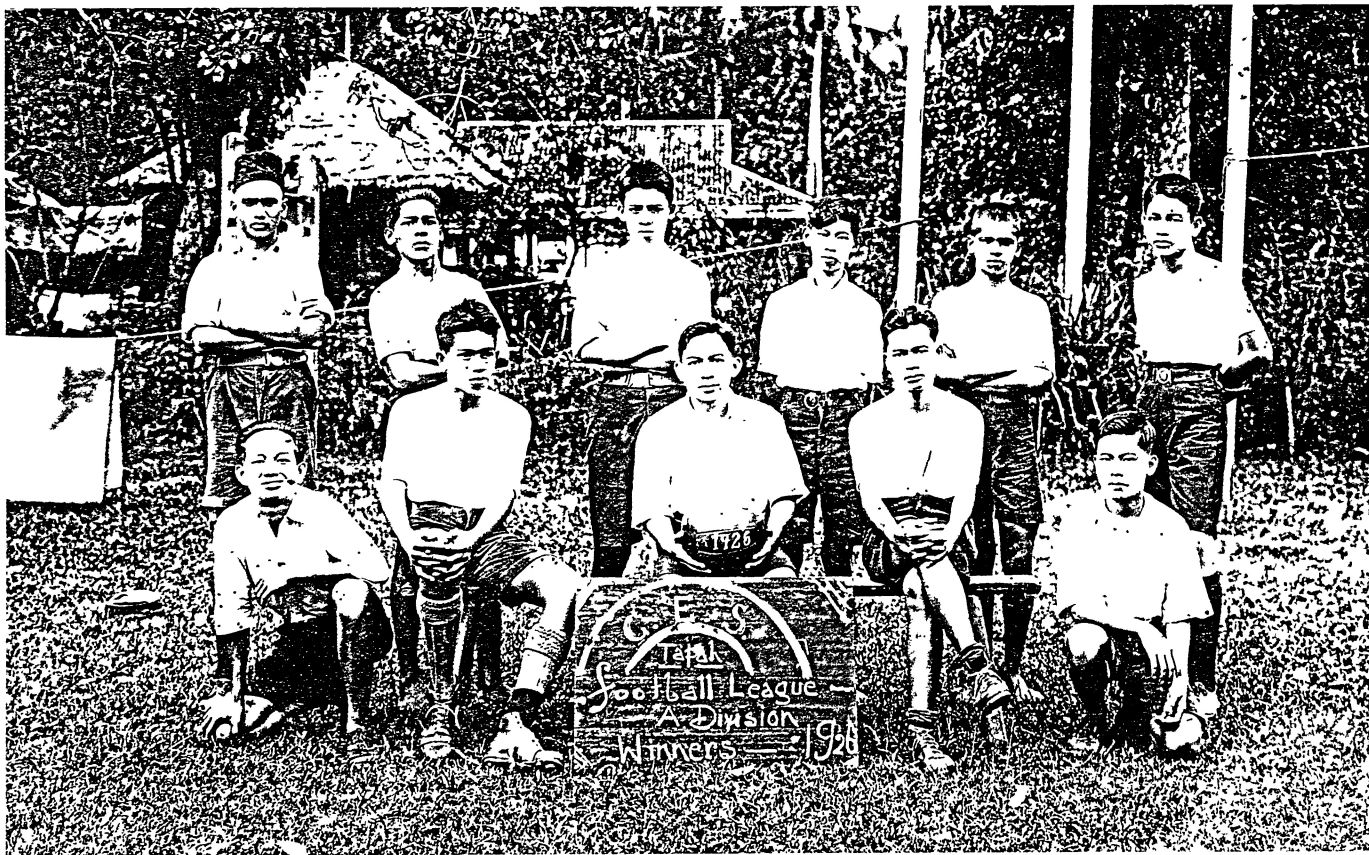
When one thinks of one's father, one has to endure the pain that lurks in the shadowy recesses of family memories. To be devoted to one's father's memory, writing down recollections of him is one way of thanking him for the legacies and lessons that he handed down. I cherish the vivid tales and stories that he would tell the family of the great matches that he played, the outstanding players of his day, and his determination to keep his place in the team, be it in **hockey, football or cricket** – three games at which he excelled and loved dearly.

My father Abdul Hamid bin Mohd Aroop was born on 18 June 1912. In 1926, at age 14, my father was vice-captain of his school team, the Government English School, Tapah, which emerged the “A” division Champions in the Tapah Football League. This team also included his brother Mohd Ariffin bin Aroop. He then moved to the Government English School, Batu Gajah, where he represented the school A Team at hockey in 1929 when he was 17. He passed the

Junior Cambridge in 1930, but for him this was not a ticket to a bureaucratic life.

## **Hockey Career**

My father played hockey for the Perak Team from 1936-1953, a period of 17 years, and he was captain of the team from 1948-1950. He played for the North Malaya hockey team against the South; the annual match in 1941 and 1948. He then represented the Combined Malayan Malays Team in 1950, and in 1952, when he was the Captain. The Perak hockey team travelled to Singapore, Seremban, Malacca, Kuala Lumpur and Penang for inter-state matches or in the quadrangular. He used to take me to these venues, other than Singapore. The journeys, in a car, took us hours, and at night, they were particularly dangerous as it was during the Emergency. At times, he used to drive the car himself. There were a few things my late brother Ahmad Rathi and I had to do for him. As a boy, I “provided support” by washing my father’s football and hockey boots, polishing his hockey sticks, oiling his cricket bats and even painting his hockey balls. I took to the job of washing my father’s boots and cleaning his hockey sticks more as an honour, as a way of helping him in his sporting endeavours, than as a chore. The rewards I got were when friends of my father and uncles told me about his great displays in the sports field.



*The Government English School Tapah Team, which won the Tapah Football League A Division in 1926. Abdul Hamid Aroop, the Vice Captain of the Team (age 15 years) is seated second from the left. Mohd Ariffin Aroop (age 14 years) standing on extreme right.*

Besides the sports chats at the dinner table, my brother and I bonded with our father in another way: by helping him collect and paste pictures of his sporting exploits onto his photo album. My father had the good habit of writing down the date and the event on the back of the photographs. He kept his albums with such meticulous care that they were preserved through the Japanese occupation, through the passage of time and many changes of residences.

During the pre-war years, Perak was the premier state in hockey, producing great players such as Aladad Khan, Mohd Isa, N. Caleb, Baharom, Mat Nor, and G.L. Carson. **The first press report of my father's sporting career** was in the *Malay Mail* of 30 November 1936, sports news report on page 7, naming the Perak Hockey Team which was to play against Malacca and Singapore in Kuala Lumpur, in which my father was selected as **a reserve**. My father used to relish the mere mention of his name in the newspaper reports of the matches he played. He started playing for Perak in 1937. From then on, he played innumerable matches and many of them were reported in the press. He particularly relished the golden moments of his play, three of which are reproduced below:

- (i) The *Malaya Tribune* of 8 February 1937, on page 18, described, *inter alia*, the hockey match between the titans Perak and Selangor (which ended in a 2-2 draw) held on the Kuala Lumpur Padang as follows: “*Other outstanding Perak players were Abdul*

*Rahman and C. La Brooy, Hamid started poorly, but was vastly improved in the second session.”*

- (ii) *The Straits Times* on 9 December 1940, page 15, reported on a match at the Selangor Club *padang* when Perak beat Selangor by a goal which “*thus lay claim to be the champion hockey side in Malaya today ... Ten minutes before half-time Perak got their goal through Hamid who, taking a free hit 25 yards from the Selangor goal, whipped the ball across to Vuilleumier who when tackled, passed it to Ah Loke, whose flick found the corner of the net.*”
- (iii) The dream of every hockey player in those days was to play in the annual FMS vs Colony Match, and later in the North-South Classic. The third North-South Annual Classic was to be played on the Kuala Lumpur *Padang* on 22 February 1941. Eight Perak players were selected for the North side, a testimony to the high standards of the players in the Perak team. The North-South Classic was the most important hockey match of the season. The North won 2-0. *The Straits Times* on 24 February 1941, on page 15, reported my father’s performance in that game as follows: “*Of the North halves, Carson, the skipper, was the best. He was the outstanding player on the field and seemed to be everywhere at the same time. Until the rest of the North defenders found their feet, he played a lone*

*hand against the South attack and held it. He received good support from Hamid, also of Perak.”*

Father was selected again to represent the North Malaya Team in the 1948 hockey “Test” against South Malaya, due to be held in Kuala Lumpur on Saturday, 28 February 1948. But unfortunately, he could not make the trip from Ipoh. In previous years, he had been a reserve player for North Malaya in 1947 and 1949.

## **Raja Azlan Shah**

Father spoke very fondly of his relationship with Raja Azlan Shah, later to become His Royal Highness Sultan Azlan Muhibuddin Shah, the Sultan of Perak (1984-2014), and the Ninth Yang di-Pertuan Agong (1989-1994). The royal sportsman first hit the headlines in an inter-state fixture between Perak and Singapore on 19 January 1947. *The Malaya Tribune* on 20 January 1947, on page 8, described the goal which he scored as follows: “... *Narain Singh found his way to the edge of the ‘D’, hit hard across and Raja Azlan completed the work with a well-placed drive to make the score 1-1. The final whistle sounded two minutes after the score.*” He scored many goals for Perak. Among the most remembered is one which the *Straits Echo* and *Times of Malaya* on 21 October 1948, page 7, described in an inter-district hockey knock-out competition in Ipoh as follows: “... *The second goal was scored by Raja Azlan who made a brilliant solo run from about midfield. Not long after*

*the start of the second half, the same player scooped the ball towards goal and an opposing defender deflected it into his own net ...”*

Raja Azlan Shah, played for the Perak State Team from 1946-1949, under the captaincy of my father. He also played for the Perak Malays. To quote one description from *The Straits Echo* and *Times of Malaya*, 21 October 1949, page 8: “... *The attack can be formidable if Raja Azlan is given the leadership with Thillainathan and Hassan as his ‘aides’. I share the opinion of a good many critics that Raja Azlan is still the centre-forward for Perak and not Thillainathan, who has been persistently tried in that position in all the trials. I have no doubt that Thillainathan deserves a place, but he would serve better as an inside man to Raja Azlan, who has the best stickwork among all the Perak players and is fast and enterprising.*”

In travelling up the country to Seremban, Malacca, Kuala Lumpur and Penang, he drove by car with other members of the team.

Raja Azlan left for studies to England on 31 December 1949.

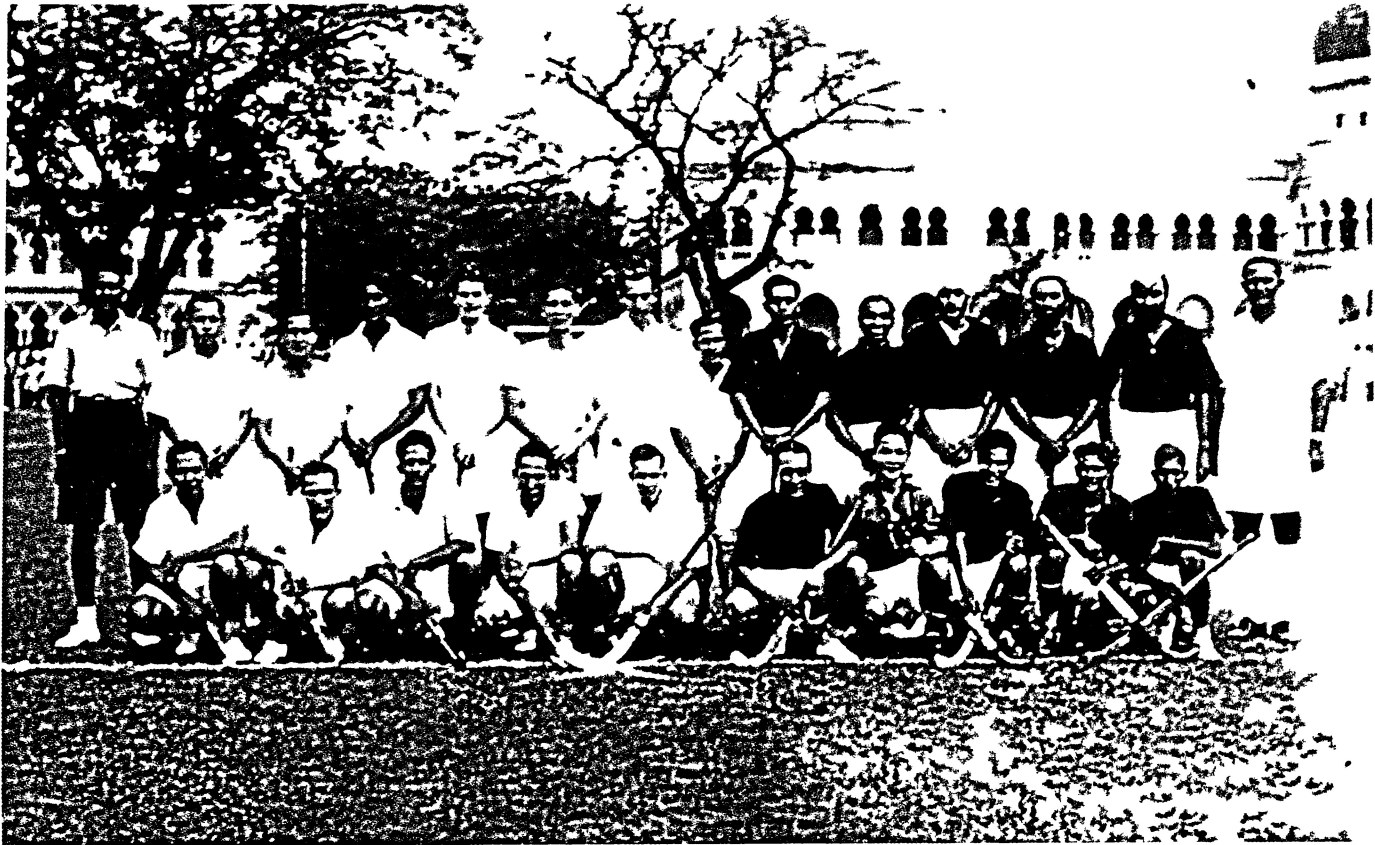
Father also played for the Perak Malays Hockey Team, in the inter-state All Malays Tournament, which had started in 1937. The objects of the tournament were to encourage hockey and to improve the standard of the game as well as to enable the Malays of the different states to know each other better. The high points of his performance in this tournament, which was resumed after the war in 1947, were (i) in December 1950



*The Perak Hockey Team which lost to Malacca 1-0 on 13.11.1949 in Seremban. Abdul Hamid Aroop standing in the centre in the backrow captained the Perak team. Raja Azlan (in the centre squatting) played centre-forward for the Perak team.*



*The members of the Perak Hockey Team posing for a photograph in a town after participating in the Inter-State Hockey Matches against Negeri Sembilan on 12.11.1949 and Malacca on 13.11.1949. Abdul Hamid Aroop is seen second from right standing and Raja Azlan second from right squatting.*



*Inter-state Hockey Match between Perak, on the right, and Selangor held on 7.2.1948 at the Selangor Club Padang Kuala Lumpur. Abdul Hamid Aroop (standing sixth from the right) captained the Perak Team. Raja Azlan played centre forward for the Perak Team (third from the right in the front row).*



*A scene in the Perak vs Selangor hockey match on 7.2.1948 held at the Selangor Club Padang, Kuala Lumpur. Abdul Hamid Aroop the Captain of the Perak Team seen second from the right.*



Perak Captain.  
At Singapore on 31.1.1949.

**ABDUL RAHMAN ADOOR**

**- THE STRIKER**

and

**RAJA AZLAN SHAH**

**- THE CENTRE FORWARD**

*- a pictorial anthology of a sportsman*



compiled by  
Tan Sri Dato' Seri Ahmad Sarji bin Abdul Hamid

*Book cover - photo taken on 5.11.1949.*



*The Combined Malays Hockey Team which drew 2-2 with the Combined Chinese Hockey Team held on 26.12.1950 at the SCRC ground Kuala Lumpur. Standing: Abdullah (Selangor), Abdul Hamid Aroop (Perak), Wan Omar (Selangor), Hazari (Perak) and Abdul Aziz (Perak). Squatting left to right: Hamzah Shamsudin (Perak), Tajuddin (Selangor), Sheikh Mustapha (Negeri Sembilan), Aminullah Karim (Perak) and Sheik Ali (Negeri Sembilan).*



*The Combined Malays Team which beat Combined Sikhs 1-0 on 28.12.1952 at the Police Depot Ground, Kuala Lumpur. Back row left to right: Sheikh Osman (NS); Abdul Hamid Aroop (captain, PK), Che Dollah (manager); Abdul Aziz (PK); Jaafar Onn (NS); Ahmad Azahari (PK). Front row left to right: Abdullah Abbas (SL); Hamzah Shamsuddin (PK); Noordin Che Nor (NS); Wan Kamaruddin (Pahang); Razali (Selangor) and Sheikh Ali (NS).*



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