

Our Badminton Greats

The sport is believed to have been invented around 1873 in England and named after the country estate, Badminton, of the Duke of Beaufort whose guests called it "the Badminton game." The Bath Badminton Club, organized in 1877, developed the first written rules and in 1893, the Badminton Association of England was founded as the first national governing body and the first All-England championship was held in 1899. Popularized by British army officers in India, badminton eventually made its way to Malaya.



According to school records, the game was first introduced to the V.I. in 1911 by the Headmaster, Mr. B. E. Shaw. Perhaps it was at the V.I. that the first badminton matches were played in Malaya but we cannot be absolutely sure of this. What we can be sure of is that these humble beginnings beside the Klang River and later on Petaling Hill helped spawn some of the great shuttlers who put Malaya and Malaysia on the badminton map of the world.

Two gravel courts were initially made by Mr Shaw for the use of the Senior Cambridge classes and another court was added later on for the juniors. In 1921, three other courts became available for the use of the Lower School boys and Chua Chong Kwee was appointed the V.I.'s first badminton captain in 1923. As the sport gained popularity, Mr Shaw's successor, Mr Richard Sidney, appointed Mr Yap Swee Hin as the badminton master in 1925 and added eight more new gravel courts for inter-house matches. The badminton captain of that year, V. C. G. Yzelman, was crowned the singles champion.

When the V.I. moved to its new premises on Petaling Hill in 1929, Mr L. F. Koch, an Old Boy, took charge of this game which was played in the two School Hall courts as well as on two outdoor courts located, presumably, in one or both of the quadrangles. In 1931 the V.I. team travelled to Singapore for the first time and beat Raffles Institution and Bud's Badminton Party, while losing to the Anglo-Chinese School. The personal interest taken by Mr F. L. Shaw, the V.I. Headmaster from 1931 to 1936, was a source of great encouragement to badminton fans as he himself played the game with gusto. Tun Omar Yoke-Lin Ong, the 1935 Badminton Vice-Captain, recalls dueling with Mr Shaw in the School Hall. That the V.I. staff also took up the game to some extent is evidenced by a 1932 report that the teachers challenged the boys to 9 matches - 4 singles and 5 doubles. Though the boys trounced the staff, the Headmaster and Mr Strahan were each able to salvage some honour by winning one out of three sets. Veteran

teacher, Mr R Thampipillay, on the verge of retirement, played with surprising energy and vigour, backed by Mr N. S. Buck.

In the thirties the game was also growing in popularity beyond the V.I., with badminton parties formed by enthusiasts to play against one another. The Selangor Badminton Association was formed at this time and it is interesting to note that its founder president was none other than ubiquitous Old Boy and V.I. teacher, Mr. Chan Hung Chin, and that most of its members were V.I. Old Boys! The V.I. courts were definitely not idle after school as the five School Houses of that era used them for practice every day from 1 to 2.30 p.m. Tournament matches were played from 4 to 5 p.m., and the prefects used them late at night from 11 to 11.30 p.m.! When the V.I.'s Mr Shaw took over as S.B.A. President, he organized the first inter-school badminton tournament. Result: the V.I. won both the inaugural senior and junior championships. The S.B.A. also presented a shield for inter-house competition. Throughout 1932, the V.I. met 16 teams and won ten of the encounters.

By the mid-thirties the school had produced Lee Kong Soon who became Selangor singles champion. In 1938, the V.I. shuttlers followed the school footballers and hockey players down to Singapore where they whipped Raffles Institution 4-1, A.C.S. 4-1 and St Joseph's 5-0. In the team was the School's first Badminton Great and future Thomas Cupper, Yeoh Teck Chye. Well known for his leaping smashes from the back of the court, he was a school player as well as the Treacher House badminton captain. To add icing to the cake, the V.I. shuttlers also won the S.B.A. Inter-Team Junior Doubles league that year.



Meanwhile, beyond the shores of Malaya, efforts were being made to promote badminton as an international sport. In 1934, the International Badminton Federation was founded and, five years later, Sir George Thomas, founder president of the I.B.F. and All-England Champion from 1920 to 1923, donated a challenge trophy for international tournament - the Thomas Cup. (However, with war breaking out in Europe that same year it would be another nine years before the Thomas Cup tournament finally got under way.) Meantime, in 1940, in still peaceful Kuala Lumpur, Teck Chye was crowned V.I. singles badminton champ and, with partner Chan Bok Seng, doubles champion as well. That same year, just about every V.I. boy turned up to watch school badminton captain Teck Chye and his team wrest back from archrivals M.B.S the Lall Singh Shield, symbol of inter-school badminton supremacy. On leaving school in early 1941, Teck Chye was chosen to play for the Selangor, a portent of things to come.

With war clouds gathering on the horizon at the end of 1941, the School Hall was requisitioned by the War Taxation Office and all badminton activities ceased while the players waited for alternate outdoors courts to be built. However, it was not to be as Japanese forces soon swept down the peninsula. It was not until November 1946, when the V.I. reopened on Petaling Hill after almost five years of Japanese and British military occupation, that the School hall echoed once again to the squeak of rubber soles and the thunk of shuttlecocks. A gift of badminton nets

by Old Boys helped with the resurrection of the game, although it was already too late to hold any inter-house tournament for that year.

After a mixed record in 1947 against its traditional rivals, the V.I. shuttlers came up to steam the following year when they won their matches against St Johns Institution (5-0) and the MBS (4-3). The Easter holidays of 1948 offered a treat for the V.I. boys as the school hall was the venue for the Malayan badminton championships. The S.B.A. hall at Kampong Attap had yet to be built and the V.I. hall was considered one the best in the country at that time with two courts and a very high ceiling. So, for a few days legendary Malayan players like Ooi Teik Hock and Wong Peng Soon strutted their stuff on the school premises. There was also a pleasant outcome from these championships at the V.I. – the Badminton Association of Malaya donated all the used shuttlecocks to the V.I. team for use in their school practices!



Those used shuttlecocks were probably not needed for ex-Victorian Yeoh Teck Chye who, as Captain of the Lok Hwa Badminton Party, was by then one of the top singles and doubles player in the country. In late 1948 he was selected with seven other players for the Malayan badminton team to sail to England to compete in the inaugural Thomas Cup competition at Preston. There were only four countries vying for the trophy at that time. The Malaysians easily trounced the Americans 6-3 and qualified to meet Denmark in the finals in early 1949. Teck Chye partnered Chan Kon Leong to demolish Poul Holm and I. Olesen 15-4 15-6 on the first day. On the second day the Malayan pair beat Jørn Skaarup and Preben Dabelsteen again in straight sets 15-11 and 15-10. Overall, the Malaysians bested the Danes 6-3 and thus were able to lift the Thomas Cup as its first winners.

On their return to Malaya, Yeoh Teck Chye and his teammates were greeted by frenzied crowds in every town they visited in their motorcade. Teck Chye pursued a career in a local bank and became involved in the trade union movement. He was chairman of the National Union of Banking Employees and later became President of the Malaysian Trade Union Congress. In 1968, trading his badminton party for a political party, he became a founder member of the Gerakan Party with fellow Victorian David Tan Chee Khoon and others. He was elected a Member of Parliament for Bukit Bintang in the 1969 general elections.



The 1949 Thomas Cup triumph by a little Southeast Asian nation over much bigger rivals triggered a tidal wave of interest in badminton throughout Malaya. Sales of badminton equipment exceeded those of other sports and makeshift badminton courts sprouted in every neighbourhood. Badminton parties were formed with members whacking shuttlecocks in the evenings and weekends. At the V.I. the school hall was so fully and constantly occupied it was estimated that in one week no less than 125 boys had played there. Fluorescent lights, a novelty in those days, were installed by the V.I. staff so that matches could continue late into the night. The V.I. badminton team fared well that year, winning eight out of nine meets with other teams. Of great satisfaction was the crushing of traditional rival MBS in two encounters, 7-0 and 6-1.

There was, however, no Victorian in the Thomas Cup triumph of May 31 and June 1, 1952, in Singapore. In that pre-television era, huge crowds gathered around radios everywhere to listen to live broadcasts of the matches between the Malaya and the United States. Even at school, the V.I. boys listened to the match commentary coming from speakers installed in the school tuck shop. Amongst them was a Thomas Cup hopeful – Oon Chong Teik. He was the son of a cousin

of Wong Peng Soon and had first met his famous uncle after the latter's return from the first Thomas Cup victory in 1949.

Inspired and mentored by Peng Soon, Chong Teik became the V.I. singles champion in 1952 and again in 1953. Better still, that same year, he snared the singles title in the inaugural Malayan schoolboys championship by defeating the hot



BACK: Surjit Raj, Wong Thong Chay, Seto Kok Wai, Oon Chong Jin, Chen Kwet Shien, San Seong Lim, Yao Keng Lib
MIDDLE: Mr Chong Yuen Shak (Asst. Badminton Master), Yee Kok Hoong (Vice-Capt.), Oon Chong Teik (Capt.), Johnny Lim, Mr Chan Ho Thang (Badminton Master).
FRONT: San Seong Kok, Hoh Chay.

favourite, the M.B.S. Champion, Ong Eng Hong, in three gruelling sets. In 1954, captained by Chong Teik, the V.I. shuttlers won 9 out of 10 matches with other schools, losing only to the Penang Free School, at that time the strongest school in the country.

Other than playing for the V.I., Chong Teik now stayed out of national school competitions but instead plunged straight into the Malayan men's singles open where he took on and lost to Thomas Cupper Ooi Teck Hock who, in turn, lost to his uncle Wong Peng Soon, the eventual champion. By the time he left for England for his medical studies, Oon Chong Teik had the Selangor championship safely under his belt.

1955 was a good year for the V.I. as Old Boy and Thomas Cupper Yeoh Teck Chye returned every weekend to coach the present boys and the results showed. San Seong Kok, who played on his toes, first played badminton as a twelve-year-old at the Pasar Road School and had beaten all the bigger boys for the primary school championship. He was also the nephew of the pre-war champion Lee Kong Soon. Now in 1955, he inherited Chong Teik's 1953 crown when he became the Malayan schoolboys' singles champion, while Surjit Raj won the Selangor schoolboys championship and Koh Tong Boo the state junior championship.

1955 was also the year of the Thomas Cup defence. Seong Kok, who was fourth or fifth best in the country at that time, was called up for the trials for the squad but was not selected. Tong Boo, a stroke player, was the first player to win the Triple Crown in the Selangor State Novices Championships, where budding players showed their stuff. It was a feat not to be repeated for another 23 years. In those days of heavy wooden rackets, technique and style were very important - one had to learn how to control the pace of the game - and stroke players had the best technique and style.

Billy Tan was also a Junior Champion, the youngest to win the title. He was a member of the Lok Hwa Badminton Club and came from a family of badminton enthusiasts. His house had its own badminton court equipped with lights for night matches.

However, no Victorians played at the Singapore Badminton Association Hall in June 1955 as the Malayan team (with Wong Peng Soon making his last Cup appearance) handily beat the Danes 8-1.



San Seong Kok was called up again for consideration in 1958 – the year the Indonesians ended Malaya's lock on the Thomas Cup. His older brother, Seong Choy, had been the V.I. badminton champion from 1949 to 1952 and had represented Selangor while his younger brother Seong Lim had captained the school badminton team as well as the school athletics team. Seong Kok himself represented the state and had been a Foong Seong Cupper from 1955 to 1962. He was also the Negri Sembilan Singles champion and doubles and mixed doubles runner-up in 1959. Between 1955 and 1958 he participated in many international championships staged in Malaya and played against



some world class players like Ferry Sonneville, Nandu Natekar, Ong Poh Lim, Wong Peng Soon, Eddy Choong and Teh Kew San.

He had a distinguished badminton career off court as well – he officiated as an umpire from district to international level from the 1970s to the 1990s. He served in the B.A.M. in committees for tournament rules, discipline, fund raising, umpiring and coaching (he trained the 1966 Commonwealth Games champion Tan Aik Huang and the Sidek brothers). Following Yeoh Teck Chye's example, Seong Kok also returned to coach the shuttlers of his old school in 1967. For his record long service to the Selangor Badminton Association as secretary from 1978 to 1981 and as chief coach for many years, he was awarded a gold medal.

Also called back in 1958 from his medical studies for the Thomas Cup defence was Oon Chong Teik. He had had a spectacular badminton career in Europe, playing first for Cambridge University, then for the British University team. Between 1954 and 1962 he won the national badminton championships of Ireland, Scotland, Wales, France, Holland, Belgium, East Germany and many other county championships in Great Britain. He reached the singles semi-finals in the world invitational at Glasgow in 1958, beating the great Danish player Finn Kobberø. In addition, he was twice a semi-finalist in the men's singles and twice in the men's doubles in the All-England championships in the early sixties.

The Thomas Cup defence was at the Singapore Badminton Stadium. Unfortunately, there was a lot of parochial politics at that time. The BAM president was from Penang and he wanted a Penang team to win the Thomas Cup. Wong Peng Soon was the team coach but he had no say. Eddie Choong, from Penang, was made Malayan Captain but Chong Teik, during training in England before flying to Singapore with Eddie Choong, had overwhelmed him in 14 out of 15 singles matches! To team up with Eddie Choong, the BAM president chose Johnny Heah (Penang), Ooi Teik Hock (Penang), Lim Say Hup (Penang) and Teh Kew San (Penang). The only outsider was the very inexperienced Abdullah Piruz from Selangor at third singles. Malaya were overconfidently predicting victory over Indonesia by either 7-2 or 8-1.



Most of the Malaysians selected had no international experience and, indeed, the Indonesians were fearing Chong Teik most because of his reputation and performance in Europe. He had beaten Indonesian Ferry Sonneville and other top players in the world and the results on the tournament circuit showed that Chong Teik was Malaya's number 1, Teh Kew San number 2 and Eddie Choong number 3. Wong Peng Soon chose Chong Teik to play singles but his recommendation fell on deaf ears. And despite Peng Soon's advice, Ong Poh Lim, the 1949 veteran who was still one of the best doubles players, was also left out for some unknown reason, to the utter delight of the Indonesians.

As it happened, Malaya was beaten very badly, Tan Joe Hock being the player who destroyed the Malayan singles players. It is of interest that, two years later, in the first round of the All-England Championship, Chong Teik beat the same Joe Hock in three hard fought sets. The latter had been the top seed at the tournament, which made the victory especially sweet to Chong Teik as it showed the BAM that their 1958 Thomas Cup selection had been essentially flawed. After that disaster the Malayan newspapers had been asking belatedly why Poh Lim and Chong Teik had been left out. With his victory over Joe Hock, his competitive badminton career came to an end as Chong Teik had to continue his training as a doctor. It is tempting to ask: If this Victorian had been in the Malayan Team would the Thomas Cup had stayed a little longer in Malaya? It is equally tempting to answer: Yes!

Nonetheless, Chong Teik continued to serve the cause of the game of badminton. In 1963, as Malaysian representative and committee member of the International Badminton Federation, Chong Teik succeeded in getting the rule making wood shots legal passed. This rule which he had spent years lobbying for stands to this day.



Another Oon also carved his name in the badminton firmament around the same time. Chong Jin, a younger brother of Chong Teik, also benefited from the coaching of their famous uncle, Wong Peng Soon, and started competitive badminton early. He played against many leading Selangor players including Abdullah Piruz, whose thunderous smashes he recalls being cowed by. Small wonder that Chong Jin's own home team was called the Thundering Smashers, which included many of his fellow V.I. badminton players.

Chong Jin left the V.I. in 1954 for his "O" and "A" levels studies at the Perse School in England. There, at seventeen, he won the All-England Junior Championships, the first Asian to do so. During school holidays Chong Jin trained with Malaysian Thomas Cuppers and All-England winners Eddy and David Choong and, while at Cambridge, with the University Badminton Team under Malayan Johnny Heah.

Between 1957 and 1958, a torrent of badminton trophies poured on Chong Jin - thirty British county singles, doubles, and mixed doubles tournaments, including the Irish, Welsh, Scottish Open Singles and Doubles Championship. He also snared the 1958 Selangor Junior Singles title while home on holiday and the French Triple Championship in Singles, Doubles, and Mixed Doubles in 1959. He represented Cambridge University in 1958 against Oxford, and subsequently became Secretary, and then Captain of the University Badminton Club in 1960-1961. Incidentally ex-Victorians Alex Lee (later Datuk) and his brother Thomas Lee were also at Cambridge and played for the Cambridge University Team. Between 1958 and 1960, this team was the second team in Europe after the Danes, as it included at least four top Malayan internationals!



Chong Jin managed to reach the All-England quarter finals in the men's singles several times. In 1960, he progressed furthest - to the semi-finals - by beating Bernt Dalberg (the Swedish number one at that time) and Indonesian Ferry Sonneville, known amongst the top Asian shuttlers as "The Grand Master" because he would spend much time thinking and planning how to demolish his opponents. Ferry was a player who taught Chong Jin how to play on an opponent's nerves - every mistake one made was compounded ten times! Yet this time, Ferry met his match in Chong Jin, who had learnt that Ferry, being a good tennis player, would defend attacks on his back hand side with a weak double-handed, tennis-type defence. So Chong Jin exploited that knowledge by changing the pace and height of his smashes to Ferry's non-existent back hand. Beating Ferry gave Chong Jin great satisfaction, to know that if he ever had to meet him in the Thomas Cup, he would beat him. Of the four times they met, Chong Jin humbled him thrice.

In the doubles Chong Jin was luckier and had many titles to show for it. One memorable partnership was in the All-England in 1959 with the Indonesian star, Tan Joe Hock. The pair reached the semi-finals but lost to the legendary pair of Finn Kobberø and Jorgen Hammergaard Hansen. Chong Jin played twice in the Glasgow World Invitation at Kelvin Hall. There, in 1963, he and Ferry Sonneville (a non-doubles player) made up a scratched pair to beat the combination of Bob McCoig and Hugh Findlay (the Scottish and English Champions) in the quarter finals. They, however, lost to the Kobberø-Hansen partnership in the semi-finals.

In 1965, politics played a hand in Chong Jin's choice of partner. He was paired with Ferry again in Copenhagen for the Danish Championships and here was where politics reared its dirty head.



1960 Bernt Dalberg congratulates the victor

At that time Malaysia and Indonesia were locked in a deadly *konfrontasi*, virtually a state of war. One evening an Indonesian Embassy official called on Ferry who was staying with Chong Jin at Erland Kops's home and told him that, since the two countries were at war, the doubles pairing could not be allowed. So the partners were swapped, with Chong Jin pairing with Erland Kops instead. As it happened this twosome clinched the Doubles title beating all other pairs, including Paul Erick Nielsen and Finn Kobberø, the top Danish pair! Consequently, Kops and Chong Jin decided to continue their partnership into the All-England men's doubles where they stormed into the finals. To get there they beat Malaysians Tan Aik Hwang and Yew Cheng Hoe who, in turn, had beaten the legendary Finn Kobberø and Hammergaard Hansen in the second round.

However, Kops was too exhausted after his three-setter with Aik Hwang and, consequently, he and Chong Jin lost the finals to Malaysians Ng Boon Bee and Tan Yee Khan. (Yet when the Malaysian camp had been training together, Chong Jin, paired with Teh Kew San, had easily defeated Boon Bee and Yee Khan in straight games!)

Still, the observant Chong Jin learned a lot watching and playing against the world's greatest. For instance, Erland Kops, and Sven Andersen had terrible tempers on the court, and in those bad moods they would concede a string of points and so that was exploited, and that was how some of these great players were beaten. Both Tan Joe Hock and Finn Kobberø were masters at net

play, and once Chong Jin had the thrill of witnessing an exciting tactical duel between the two masters. Whenever Joe Hock trickled the shuttle over the net, Kobberø did even better, as if to say, "You can trickle it over three times, well, I can do it four times!" Neither player lifted the shuttle. The match was over in fifteen minutes with Finn proving to be the world's best at the net. It was the shortest time spent in the court at an international event!

In 1964, like Chong Teik before him, Chong Jin was invited by Badminton Association of Malaysia to return for the Thomas Cup trials. It was a difficult decision for him as the honour to play for one's country came only once in a lifetime. With great reluctance, Chong Jin had to turn down the chance as his Cambridge University medical finals were only six months away and, with academic demands so great, returning to Kuala Lumpur would have meant another year of studies. He eventually retired in 1966 from top class badminton. He had already reached the top in badminton, and it was now time to move on to medicine.

Graduating with a string of medical degrees, Chong Jin first lectured in Britain and then joined the University of Singapore in 1975 as lecturer in medicine. He headed the liver cancer research team and was in charge of the research and technological development of a human hepatitis B vaccine. He was promoted as associate professor, and was consultant to the World Health Organisation and to the International Agency for Research in Cancer. Chong Jin holds five world-wide patents for industrial hepatitis compounds. He worked as a medical oncologist in 1986, and as consultant to several of Singapore Government listed companies. He is scientific advisor to the Catholic Medical Guild. Today Chong Jin is a specialist in cancer immunotherapy and research. In 2003, the Catholic Church in Rome bestowed on him the Order of Malta when he was knighted by Papal Order as a Knight of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller of St. John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta for his efforts to warn the world of the dangers of human medical and ethical abuse, especially in human cloning and embryonic stem cell experimentation. As a Hospitaller, Chong Jin is involved in humanitarian missions, under which medical emergency aid is sent to disaster areas, the two most recent being the Bali Bomb disaster in October 2002 and the besieged Holy Family Hospital in Bethlehem.



Back in the V.I., there were a few years of post-Oon drought before another crop of badminton stars emerged. In the 1960 inter-school competition the School reached the finals of the Selangor region but lost to the M.B.S. The following year, the V.I. entered the finals of the Selangor inter-school knockout competition but lost to St John's. However, in the Selangor inter-school badminton league championship, the V.I. fought its way to the top, winning all its nine matches and became the first holder of the Stowe Cup. In 1962, the school again entered the

final of the Selangor zone of the inter-school knockout competition for the King's Cup but lost 2-3 to Cochrane Road School. The loss was softened by the V.I. shuttlers winning eleven matches in a row to retain the Stowe Cup for the second year running. School Badminton Vice-Captain Koh Tong Chui, the younger brother of Tong Boo, captured the novices title that same year by beating a Malayan Air Force player, Chuah Ban Hin, 15-10, 12-15, 15-6. As a young boy in 1952, Tong Chui had listened to the Thomas Cup radio broadcasts and had fallen under the spell of badminton with visions of being the next Wong Peng Soon!



Kok Lee Ying

V.I. girls took part for the first time in school badminton with Genevieve Liew crowned singles champion in 1962. The following year – the year the school became runners-up to the S.J.I. in the Selangor zone - a talented female player joined the school with impressive credentials in tow. She was Kok Lee Ying, the Selangor novices triple crown champion of 1959 and a member of the Selangor women's team to boot. Lee Ying now brought glory to the V.I. girls team, becoming the Selangor girls champion and runner-up in the national championships. She snatched the schoolgirls national crown and, with her partner, Annie Keong, won the national women's doubles title as well. Lee Ying also represented the country in the Uber Cup. Soo Sun Wah and Koh Tong Chui represented Selangor combined schools. That same year, Wong Peng Wah, a pre-war V.I. player and a partner of Yeoh Teck Chye, presented two rackets and a junior challenge cup to the school.



Soo Sun Wah & Koh Tong Chui

In 1964, in the Selangor schools tournament, Sun Wah and Tong Chui, the V.I. badminton captain, became doubles champions. The latter was the runner-up to the singles crown as well. Tong Chui also won the Selangor junior singles title. In the newly inaugurated Malaysian schoolboys tournament, Sun Wah and Tong Chui became the first holders of the doubles title. This was impressive considering that the tournament was open only to those who were already champions in their respective states. The dynamic duo went on to represent Selangor in the Heah Joo Seang Cup competition.

Tong Chui was also selected to play for Malaysian Schools against Singapore Schools the same year (the result was 9-0). He played in the third singles spot behind Thomas Cuppers Tan Aik Huang and Punch Gunalan. In the state Gold Cup tournament later that year, Tong Chui pulled off an amazing first round upset against Thomas Cupper Tan Yee Khan, the memory of which still thrills him to this day. In addition he was crowned state junior singles champion and was included in the state badminton squad to train under former Thomas Cupper, Lim Kee Fong. To cap a fabulous year, Tong Chui won the V.I. singles and doubles title for an unprecedented third year.

In a giddy year in 1965, the V.I. won three under-18 trophies: the Rajalingam Cup, the Stowe Cup and the McGregor Cup. (This hat trick was repeated in 1966.) The school was also runner-up in the under-15 tournament. Soo Sun Wah was singles champion in both under-18 and under-20 tournaments. The V.I. was also runner-up in the doubles in the same tournament and, in the

King's Cup competition, the school was runner-up to the Penang Free School. Sun Wah was chosen to represent Selangor in the Malaysian schoolboys' championship, while the V.I. team was tapped to represent Selangor in the Heah Joo Seang Cup against Pahang. The following year, the school team was selected to represent Selangor in the King's Cup tournament and emerged runner-up. In the under-20 inter-school individual tournament Sun Wah was singles champ and runner-up in the doubles and was also chosen to represent Selangor in the Malaysian schoolboys tournament.



In 1967, there was no Victorian in the Malaysian squad that won back the Thomas Cup in Jakarta, only to lose it to Indonesia again three years later. It would be a quarter century before the Thomas Cup returned to Malaysian shores again and a team of largely V.I. players would one day come along to do that job!

The V.I. regained the McGregor Cup beating St Johns 4-1 in the finals in 1968. Four V.I. players were in the combined schools team. New stars were now coming into the firmament - Ng Fay Meng became Selangor under-20 singles champion, runner-up in the novices championship and a semi-finalist in the Selangor junior tournament. He became the Malaysian schoolboys singles champion and was selected to represent Malaysia at the Asian students badminton championships in Tokyo. Lim Shook Kong and Lee Kok Pheng emerged champion and runner-up respectively in the under-17 singles section and teamed up to win the doubles title. They were semi-finalists in the under-20 singles and doubles sections.



With its star-studded team, the V.I. smashed its way into the 1969 finals of the elusive King's Cup. The finals at Ipoh against St Michael's Institution during the school holidays were won on tactical play rather than on skills and superiority. Fixtures were arranged so the Victorians could be sure of winning two singles and one doubles. As expected, Shook Kong and Kok Pheng each won their singles games handily. The next singles and first doubles were lost to S.M.I. But the final doubles pair - Shook

Kong and Kok Pheng - smothered the opposition 15-2 and 15-0 to bring the Cup home to the V.I. for the first time. That same year the under-18 team retained their championship title for the second year running, and the school recaptured the under-20 title as well. Again Shook Kong and Kok Pheng represented the country, this time in Manila in the Asian junior championships. Shook Kong emerged as singles runner-up and, teaming with Kok Pheng, lost to their Malaysian teammates by the narrowest of margins in the finals - a deuce in the rubber set.



Lee Kok Pheng, Lim Shook Kong

The following year the Shook Kong-Kok Pheng juggernaut continued its blitz on badminton titles. Kok Pheng won the Selangor restricted state championship - the first time a schoolboy had achieved that honour. Shook Kong was the champion in the Selangor schoolboys individual championships while Kok Pheng was runner-up. The duo were Selangor's representatives in the Malaysian schoolboys championships and staged an all-V.I. singles final with Kok Pheng emerging as champion. In the doubles they played together and emerged runners-up. Following that, they anchored the Selangor team to help snatch the Heah Joo Seang Cup from Penang.



Cheah Hong Chong

In 1971 Kok Pheng and Shook Kong went on an international tour that included participation in the All-England championships. They were runners-up for the doubles title in the Belgium Open. In the Selangor schools individual championships Kok Pheng was singles champion and partnered Shook Kong to repeat the previous year's feat - runners-up for the doubles title. Young Samani Abdul Ghani became under-16 champion and won the Selangor Malays junior singles title. Cheah Hong Chong partnered S.J.I.'s Moo Foot Lian, a future Thomas Cupper, to take the Selangor junior doubles title. Hong Chong was also selected to represent the country in Jakarta for the Asian international schoolboys championships.

In 1972 the under-16 team emerged champions for the first time, while Hong Chong was chosen to represent Selangor in the Foong Seong Cup competition. He also represented Selangor in the M.S.S.M. championships as vice-captain. His greatest success was winning the Malaysian schoolboys singles title. Samani, meanwhile, won a string of titles - Selangor Malays Novices champion, Selangor Malays junior champion and Selangor Malays under-20 champion. In the Selangor under-16 individual championships Samani was singles runner-up and snared the doubles title with Chew Ker Chee.

The following year, Hong Chong snared the national under-21 doubles championship and was rewarded with a trip to Denmark, Germany and England, where he participated in the All-England championship. On his return he was called for national training with the Thomas Cup squad as well as the SEAP Games squad. His fellow national youth player, Samani, by now the school badminton captain, was the only schoolboy selected to join the Malaysian Badminton team on a two-week tour of China.



1973 saw a historic first as the V.I. reached the finals of both the King's Cup and the Queen's Cup. Three busloads of Victorians descended on Alor Star to cheer the boys and girls teams on. The boys beat Penang's St Xavier's Institution 3-2 while the girls followed with an identical 3-2 score over Keat Wah School of Kedah. Topping off a magnificent day, the two trophies were presented by the Chief Education Officer, former V.I. Headmaster, Mr V. Murugasu. Incidentally, the trophy for the girls had actually gone missing just before the ceremony and another cup was substituted in its place with no one any wiser! Applauding in the crowd was one Khoo Teng Yuen who was destined to play a great part in the badminton fortunes of the V.I. and of Malaysia for the next two decades.

Then the V.I.'s star power dimmed for a few years and though it was badminton champion at state and Federal Territory level it was not until 1976 that the school could regain the King's Cup, beating the Penang M.B.S. 4-1. The school's badminton fortunes started moving up from this year on. The following year, again representing Selangor, the V.I. team retained the King's Cup after steamrolling over Johor, Kelantan, Melaka, Perak and Penang with 5-0 scores in every encounter. Of course, 1976 was the year the first of the five Sidek brothers - Mohd. Razif bin Haji Sidek - joined the V.I. The brothers' story ends, of course, with the famous 1992 Thomas Cup victory but how it all happened must begin with the hitherto unknown story of a former V.I. teacher with a lifelong passion for badminton...



Tall and wiry, he had played badminton for his school, the Sentul M.B.S., and when he finished his Form Five exams, Khoo Teng Yuen was interviewed for a teaching position. He had specifically requested that he NOT be posted to the V.I. because he had heard that all V.I. boys

were snobs. However the Ministry of Education ignored his request and so, in early January 1957, he reported for duty as a V.I. temporary teacher. Teng Yuen taught mostly history and mathematics to the lower Forms. He was also a Treacher House assistant master. So much did he enjoy his two years in V.I. that by the time he was accepted in December 1958 for teacher training at Brinsford College in England, Khoo Teng Yuen had definitely revised his opinion of the V.I.!

In England Teng Yuen played badminton for Brinsford and the local county. He also took a badminton coaching course. On his return to Malaya in 1960 he was posted to the Government English School (now Sekolah Sultan Abdul Aziz) at Kampong Kuantan, Kuala Selangor, where he was interested in scouting and badminton, especially badminton.



Khoo Teng Yuen, 1957

Rural schools being short of playing field space, badminton was the most popular sport and there were lots of good potential among the boys from the fishing communities. Living and breathing badminton, Teng Yuen started grooming his boys, first to be district players, then state players and finally national players. His innovative methods bear telling: although the Government English School had only one court, Teng Yuen contrived to string half a net on either side of the court to fill up the space, thus utilizing every available inch and getting the equivalent of three "courts". Even on Saturdays or holidays, Teng Yuen would be in the school organizing training sessions.

When the badminton authorities did not recognize his British coaching qualifications Teng Yuen took another coaching course - under the B.A.M. in Kuala Lumpur - graduating with the top grade. With that he started churning out high quality players from his school who went on to represent the M.S.S.M. At a time when many Kuala Lumpur schools were headhunting good players, Teng Yuen helped to transfer a lot of his players to the V.I. which he knew had good facilities and support. The availability of a hostel at the V.I. for out-of-towners was also a great plus over the other rivals.

In January 1977, Teng Yuen was finally transferred back to Kuala Lumpur, to the Jalan Temerloh Boys School (now Sekolah Titiwangsa). It had no hall to speak of. Undeterred, Teng Yuen drew lines for badminton courts on the school's tar road and cemented over one area next to the canteen for a court and from then on Jalan Temerloh started churning out top class players. Because the school lacked financial support, Teng Yuen still had to transfer many of his boys to the V.I. which meant a lot of leg work for him visiting and pleading with the Education Department to approve the transfers. Because of his friendship with the badminton master, Shuaib Mohd. Kassa, Teng Yuen was at that time also going regularly to the V.I. to give free coaching to the players.

As it happened, the two V.I. Senior Assistants, Oh Kong Lum and Dharam Prakash at that time had been V.I. pupils when Teng Yuen was teaching at the V.I. Now they made overtures to him to join the V.I. but before things got worked out, a strange twist of fate resulted in Oh Kong Lum being transferred to Teng Yuen's Jalan Temerloh school as Headmaster and Dharam Prakash as his Senior Assistant! Suddenly the whole set up was in place - there were two ex-Victorians on the Jalan Temerloh side giving their blessing to Teng Yuen's training and transferring badminton

talent to the V.I.! On the V.I. side was badminton master Shuaib Mohd. Kassa (who, very conveniently, was also the hostel master) and two very supportive Headmasters over a stretch of almost a decade - Dr Abdul Shukor bin Haji Abdullah (1979-1982) and Encik Abdul Rahim bin Abdul Majid (1982-1988).



Over the next few years, talent smothered the V.I. badminton courts, talent that would be translated into household names a few years down the line. The onslaught for the 1992 Thomas Cup had started when fourteen-year-old Razif Sidek arrived in 1976 - thanks to Teng Yuen's efforts - from the Banting Primary School. Razif was put up in the home of Aziz Bokhari, the Secretary General of the BAM, while he attended the V.I. The same year, Kuah Huat Poh, arrived from Teng Yuen's old school in Kuala Selangor. A little later, Razif's brothers Jalani and Misbun joined Form 1 and Form 4, respectively, in the V.I. (They stayed at the VI hostel.) Then another brother, Rahman, became the next Sidek to walk through the portals of the V.I. into Form 1 and eventually Rashid made the pilgrimage from Banting to complete the V.I. Sidek Five.

Playing for the V.I., young Razif built up an impressive scalp collection from the M.S.S.M. and Dewan Bandaraya championships, while Jalani became the under-15 singles champion in the M.S.S.M. in 1977 and big brother Misbun cornered the under-18 national singles title. (The latter repeated the feat the following year.) By 1979 Misbun was already good enough to be included in the national Thomas Cup squad (it failed to make it to the finals). That same year, Jalani was national under-18 singles and doubles champion and was named Selangor schoolboy athlete of the year. Jalani also participated in the ASEAN schools championship in Jakarta and in internationals against Indonesia and India.



Oozing with talent, the V.I. badminton team was now mowing down the opposition with ease. In 1978, the school achieved a hat trick by winning the King's Cup the third time. In the nine preliminaries and the finals - where they beat the Anglo-Chinese School, Ipoh - they had won either by 5-0 or by nothing worse than 4-1. When the B.A.M formed a youth squad, every single player was from V.I.! From the Commonwealth Games in Edmonton that year came news that Ong Tiong Boon had won a doubles silver medal. He had been transferred two years earlier from Kuala Selangor into Form 6 in the V.I. (through Teng Yuen) and had become M.S.S.M. under-20 champion well before 1977.

Foo Kok Keong was originally at the Jalan Temerloh Boys School where he had excelled in badminton, football, basketball and even music. Teng Yuen noticed that he had the ability to work very hard and so presented a stark option to him - if he wanted to play badminton well he had give up all his other interests, which he did. After Kok Keong finished his Form 3 in 1978, for the



sake of his badminton future, Teng Yuen transferred him in the V.I. As Teng Yuen was already coaching the V.I. players, he could still keep an eye on Kok Keong whenever he visited.

As the eighties rolled in, Misbun became the 1980 under-20 M.S.S.M. champion with Huat Poh as the runner-up. The two partnered each other to win the under-20 doubles championship as well. Jalani and Misbun were also achieving successes on the Benson and Hedges national circuit. Jalani was tapped for the Thomas Cup squad and was sent for various championships in Europe to gain experience. Partnering Razif to form the youngest ever pair, he made it into the quarter-finals in the all-England doubles championship.



In 1981, the V.I. team (captained by Foo Kok Keong) won back the King's Cup again. (This feat was to be repeated in 1983, 1984, 1985.) Kok Keong won the under-20 champion title that year and was included in the junior national team coached by Teng Yuen. Kok Keong, Ong Doon Heng and Tee Seng Kok represented the state in the under-20 team while Rashid, Seng Kok and Lee Kong Yong played for the state under-15s. Naturally, the school under-15 team became, unavoidably, the state champion.

In 1983 Lee Fook Heng joined the V.I., captained the school under-15 team to the state runner-up title and became the under-15 singles and doubles champion himself. The following year he was selected for the national junior team. He was to be the under-15 and under-16 singles and doubles champion during his years in the V.I. Meantime, Rashid, Wong Tat Meng and Tee Seng Keong were selected for the 1984 national youth squad. In 1985, Rashid, who was crowned V.I. sportsman of the year, won the singles and doubles titles (with Tee Seng Keong) in the Asian Youth championship in Kuala Lumpur, while Fook Heng won the state opens in Pahang, Negeri Sembilan and Selangor. In 1986 and in 1987, the V.I. under-18 team was state champion and won third place in the national championship.



Next to join the school was future Thomas Cupper Soo Beng Kiang hailing from Sungai Petani, Kedah. With Fook Heng, he was chosen in 1986 for the under-18 team which clinched the M.S.S.W.P. championship for the fourth time. In 1988, Wong Ewee Mun, another future Thomas Cupper, and Pang Chen of Jalan Temerloh School jumped on the V.I. Express, thanks again to the efforts of Teng Yuen. They had been given RM1,200 scholarships by the Badminton Academy as incentives. Wong Tat Meng soon followed their footsteps to the V.I. under Project 88/90, a project launched under the aegis of the Kuala Lumpur mayor, Datuk Elyas Omar, to identify and nurture potential Thomas Cuppers. By 1990 Pang Chen had clinched the M.S.S.M. under-20 singles championship.

Misbun Sidek, at his peak as a player in the eighties, carved his name beyond the V.I. His achievements locally and overseas would fill a small book. To name a few: In 1979, at the SEA Games in Manila, playing in the team event, he had the satisfaction of beating Indonesia's Lim Swie



King, the reigning world singles champion at that time. Misbun was national champion without a break from 1981 to 1986 and was selected for the Thomas Cup squads of 1981 and 1985 which were unsuccessful in their bid to bring back the Trophy. In 1981 Misbun won a gold for Malaysia in SEA Games. Over a span of seven years he won the open championships in Sweden, Canada and Taiwan and was runner-up in the World open championship (1982), All-England open championships (1986), China open championship (1986), and World Grand Prix championship (1988).



The other Victorians, too, were cutting their badminton teeth after leaving the V.I. In 1982, Razif, pairing with Jalani, bagged the doubles gold at the All-England championship and the 1982 Commonwealth Games in Brisbane. They repeated the trick at the Auckland Games in 1990. Foo Kok Keong won the singles silver at the same Games. Wong Tat Meng played in the third singles that helped Malaysia win the 1989 Sea Games gold. Lee Fook Heng was a reserve in the 1988 Thomas Cup challenge which ended up with Malaysia as runners-up to China. He was then, at age 18, the youngest ever player in a Thomas Cup squad.

The Sidek brothers were a dedicated yet humble lot, the result of the right values and attitudes drummed in by their father. Even when competition training coincided with their Hari Raya break, they would be back in their Banting home town to visit relatives by day, and by the evening they would be back in Kuala Lumpur for their workouts. Even while watching TV, they would be exercising with light weights or be kneading hard rubber balls in their hands to strengthen their racket grip. When they were hungry, the brothers would walk to the Jalan Campbell stalls to snack on some humble noodles. No fancy restaurants for them.



The other players worked very hard, too, their dedication and hard work second to none. For instance, Foo Kok Keong would dive down to the floor to retrieve a ball, scratching his knees and thinking nothing of it. Misbun was a very innovative person: when he felt he needed extra stamina he would suddenly go off running into the noon day sun. In the middle of the night when he needed to practise certain skills he would simply run off to the badminton hall.

The moment of truth arrived in 1992. For the six Victorians on the Thomas Cup Squad, all the school, state and national championships fought and won in the years prior to this were merely milestones on the long road to this final destination. The Malaysian Thomas Cup squad stormed its way into the finals to meet Indonesia on May 16 in the supercharged atmosphere of the National Stadium. First, Rashid Sidek beat Ardy Wiranata; then Razif and Jalani lost to Eddy Hartono and Gunawan in three sets, tying the two countries 1-1. Next, Foo Kok Keong beat Alan Budi in straight sets and when Soo Beng Kiang partnered Cheah Soon Kit to overcome Rexy Mainaky and Ricky Subagja, the Thomas Cup was in back in Malaysia again. (It didn't matter that Kwan Yoke Meng lost to Joko Suprianto in the fifth match). The whole nation (and their old School) swooned with joy and worshipped their heroes.



That was eleven years ago. Even before the great Thomas Cup victory of 1992, a new national sports strategy had seen the establishment of the Sri Garden Badminton Academy, a free private school on land belonging to Sri Garden School. B.A.M. coaches selected the best badminton potential of the country to study at Sri Garden, following a special curriculum to nurture future Thomas Cuppers. During that period the V.I.'s admission policy switched to preference for academic results rather than badminton prowess. As such, coupled with the retirement of Khoo Teng Yuen from coaching in 1993, the historic role of the V.I. as a hot house for Teng Yuen's protégés and as a nursery of badminton greats has finally ended. While there are a few talented individuals in the V.I. badminton team today, the school's domination is limited to the Bangsar Zone of the Federal Territory. In fact, in its encounters with the Badminton Academy (succeeded a couple of years ago by the Bukit Jalil Sports School sponsored by the National Sports Council), the V.I. has invariably lost.



Still, the Victoria Institution can take pride in having been, through a twist of fate, a Badminton Juggernaut that had churned out more than its share of Badminton Greats for the country!

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*Created on 28 February 2003.
Last update on 23 November 2003.*

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