

## **Hiyamallar Scores 6 Goals!** by Hiyamallar

Although tennis was the main sport in which I participated, I now look back and see the many occasions when soccer (football) took center stage, often during our Christmas trips.

Being American, I always regretted not having learned to play at an earlier age, especially with dribbling; you can always tell the skill level of a player from watching them do this, just as in basketball (which even uses the same word).

Looking back, one story in particular stands out, from Curitiba (Brazil) in the 1999/2000 trip, where our morning 2-mile races took place in a park that had beautiful trees and birds.

One morning, after the race had taken place, Guru asked who had participated. Noticing that I had not raised my hand, he asked why that was. I said (feeling a little embarrassed) that

the boys had planned a football game for the afternoon and that I wanted to “save my energy”.

As all of those who know him might expect (imagine that excuse!) his response let me gently know that I should have ran the race, which made me feel somewhat disappointed in myself.

Later that afternoon, we found an empty pitch and began playing, and I recall that I began to score some unusual goals. It also began to rain, and we had to move the game to another field, but my tendency to score continued, even once when a ball was crossed, hit my head or face, and somehow entered the goal!

By the end of the game, we were all wet, muddy, and happy, and went on to our usual routine, ending up in the meditation hall.

At the end of the function, Guru asked if anyone had anything to say, at which point Projjwal stood up, mentioning (for which I am ever grateful) that I had scored 6 goals in our game.

When Guru heard this, he paused for a second and then said “six goals, that is something!” I immediately felt quite happy, not least as it removed the slightly guilty feeling I had been carrying about not racing that morning, and made my comment perhaps more reasonable.

However, Guru then added, “Hiyamallar, you come to Brazil and the spirit of Pelé enters into you”!, an unexpected blessing that felt like a breath from Heaven.

So, for whatever reason, to this day, I have chosen to accept these words literally, and my friends have graciously allowed me to live in this world!