

A Few Memories: Jogyata

I remember playing in a number of soccer games on the old grassy Jamaica High School field back in the late 80's. Guru was there watching us, two teams formed spontaneously from those who heard of the fixture and battling it out over those summer afternoons.

I was a very mediocre player but we all played with great zest and enthusiasm with Guru watching, naturally wanting to impress. What was charming was a post-match presentation following one of these games – Guru presented us with a glittering cardboard trophy with His photo, our name and various other football decorations glued to it, each slightly more elaborate than the last depending on our level of prowess. I recall four levels of assessment – super-excellent, excellent, very good and good.

My tassled, colorful trophy with my name embossed on a metal tag merited a 'Very Good', and Guru's beaming smile erased any disappointment at my lower ranking. I still have this trophy somewhere with its memories and smiles.

Once on a Christmas trip somewhere, we played soccer with the staff team from our host hotel. At kick-off the hotel team was a player short, and I was recruited to make their 11th player – I was invited to be on defence by their goal mouth, a position in which everyone felt I was likely to cause the least amount of damage! Unfortunately, on the first wave of attack from our disciple team, the ball ricocheted off my desperately outstretched leg, deflected past the goalie and in to the net – an own goal! There was much muttering in the foreign language of our hosts team, as though they suspected a conspiracy, but it was simply unfortunate. Soon after I was subbed off when the hotel's own 11th player arrived. But I was consoled by Guru's huge commiserating smile afterwards, and my wounded pride further consoled at His amused reference to my unintended 'own goal' at the evening function.

It was after that game that Guru had been greatly upset by our team's performance, the physicality and aggressiveness of our play against the smaller – and more skilled – opponents from the hotel staff. Guru was also concerned that had we hurt them, how would these poorer people and their families cope if they were unable to work? It was a memorable scolding, and many were singled out for their behavior, another of those life lessons that taught humility, sportsmanship, a deepening understanding of what it means to be a disciple.