

St John's in the Sixties

By

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(Old Boy 1958 to 1968)

GENERAL

The early sixties presented St John's with the greatest of challenges of all time, eventually (from mid sixties) enabling the school to reach a milestone. Many other institutions in the north would never have dared such a thought. The Old Boy's Association of St John's, together with the Principal, Staff, Parents and well wishers embarked on a fund raising task successfully, to establish St John's College Jaffna as a PRIVATE NON-FEE LEVYING SCHOOL

The Principal Mr A.W Rajasekaram and the Vice Principal Mr J.T Chelliah, both old boys and staff of the school for more than a decade, had taken their challenging roles just before the year clocked 1960. This versatile combination continued through most of the sixties, taking the school swiftly during its turbulent times, until in late 1966, the Principal had to retire due to ill health. Early 1967 saw St John's being appointed, with a new Principal, in Mr K Pooranampillai, one of the most sought after administrators in Sri Lanka. KP, as he was known to many, all of whom admired his gentle but firm approach, was known for his proven ability in administration, which held his former school, Hartley College in high esteem for a few decades. The KP /J.T combination took St John's well into 70's with resounding success in almost all aspects.

When one reviews the sixties, it will be noted that St John's continued to maintain its high standards in the academic arena and also moved into top position in the field of sports, not only within the Northern borders, but also in the whole of Sri Lanka, both at university and national levels.

The end of the sixties saw St John's on a firm financial footing and the decade which started with an uphill task to remain as a private school, ended on a happy note. The school's take-over bid by the government was one of the gravest faced and overcome by St John's and many thanks are due to the OBA led by Dr A.V.A Vethanayagam, Mr S.J. Gunasegaram, Mr S Kanagaratnam, Mr RE Rajanayagam, Mr William Mather, Mr J.T.R Perinpanayagam, Mr C.A.W Edwards, Mr Paul Lewis, Mr P.T Sivapragasam and Mr E R Vannithamby, the "never say die" staff of the school and the generous parents and well wishers.

ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE ACADEMIC ARENA

The academic standards of a school is judged by the number of students it sends to the university every year and every parent awaits anxiously for this moment, as their child's school career draws the curtain. The persevering and hardworking parents in the north, who had sent their kids to St John's, would have nothing to regret when one glances through the performance of St John's at University Entrance exams as listed below:

Year	Medicine/ Dental	Engineering	Sciences	Arts	Agric/Vet	Total
1960	30	3	13	7	4	57
1961	6	2	6	2	1	17
1962	15	6	10	-	-	31
1963	15	4	6	2		29
1964	8	6	8	3	2	27
1965	11	4	15			30
1966	8	5	9	2	3	27
1967	6	9	9	4	2	30

1968 & 1969 results are not available at this time

It is worthwhile noting that in 1960 and 1967 St John's sent the largest number of students in the whole island for medicine and engineering respectively. In 1960, S Easwarakanthan won the University Scholarship and the R.J.J Scholarship on the results of the combined Preliminary and Ist M.B exam. Based on the 1964 AL results, EJ Jebarajah and Shantha Somasundaram won Engineering Scholarships to West Germany and Japan respectively, while D.P Moothathamby clinched 2nd place in the English Essay Competition held by the Industrial Exhibition, which was open to all schools in the island. D.P also graduated with 2nd class Hons in Dentistry. P Naganathan who entered the Engineering Faculty in 1966, graduated with a Ist class degree in Civil Engineering in 1970 and K Jeyapalan, who entered the faculty in 1968, completed with a Ist class degree in Civil Engineering, topping the batch. In the same year, C Sivendran and B. Rajadurai completed their engineering degree with 2nd class Hons. In the previous year, two other Johnians, P.Karunaharan and M.Sekar kept the flag flying in the Engineering faculty with 2nd class Hons in the finals.

Rajan Rasiah(1965) and V Manoharan(1971) from the Colombo Medical Faculty and M Muttiah(1973) from the Peradeniya Medical Faculty concluded their undergraduate careers with 2nd class Hons. G Jeyakumar (known as Barry), was one of the few, who entered the Faculty of Law and obtained his Law Degree from St John's. After having a short practice with a famous criminal lawyer, Barry was appointed as a State Counsel/Crown Counsel, a prestigious appointment. He continued in that position until he established his own practice.

R J Jeganathan, based on his performances in the A.L results in 1967, won a scholarship to India to do a degree in Textile Engineering, wha on his return was appointed Mills Manger for Asian Cotton Mills in Mt Lavinia.

CRICKET

The standard of cricket reached by Johnians in the late 50's, specially due to the performances of the Tissainayagam brothers and the Lingam brothers was definitely not an easy task to even level with. The 1960 cricket team, although included stalwarts like the work horse S.S Shanmugarajah, the wily leg spinner A.I Somanader, the stylish wicket keeper RCS (Ranjit) Cooke and C Balakrishnan,(Bala represented Sri Lanka later), had to settle for a fair season with only 3 wins out of 6 games. The lull followed into the next year too, when our cricket team under C. Balakrishnan had to be happy with only I match for the season, the famous SATYAGRAHA taking precedence.

St John's were on a team building process in 1963 with youngsters and among a star studded bunch which included D.M Selvanayagam, DJ.N Selvadurai, K. Varunalingam, P.Kanagathurai,

M.Theivendra, Ravi Thambiayah, RJ Jeganathan and C Anandakrishnan, there emerged a Champion in M Theivendra, who was barely out of his teens and going to take the cricket loving public of the north by storm with his cricketing skills for the next 7 years, captaining the St John's and the Jaffna Combined School's teams twice each and easily the best cricketer and even the best sportsman St John's ever produced. Former English Test Cricketer, who was on a coaching mission in Sri Lanka described Theivendra as a Gary Sabers of Sri Lanka and stated to the press categorically that the best school boy cricketer of Ceylon hails from the north. Theive won the best school boy cricketer of the north award twice in his illustrious career.

As these youngsters were widening their shoulders in the next year, although the performance of St John's, as a whole in cricket didn't reach expected heights, Theivendra's supremacy was opening up. St John's was still voted the best school side in the north. The coveted Northern Schools schoolboy cricketer award and the best batsman's award were won by Theivendra and Ravi Thambiayah respectively. The combined Jaffna school's team had 4 Johnians in it.

The 1964 team captained by M Theivendra although was an unbeaten side, the limelight of the season was the many outstanding achievements of Theivendra, who won the best schoolboy cricketer, the best batsman and the best all rounder awards sponsored by the Daily News Publishing Group. Jeya Vyravipillai, a freshman in the side who had captained the 2nd eleven team the previous year, also established himself as an up and coming allrounder with his purposeful middle order batting, cunning spinners and his brilliance in fielding at short leg. Representing the Jaffna School's combined team against an All Australian School's team captained by Test Cricketer Graham Yallop, Vyra scored a beautiful half century ,confirming his class.

1965 cricket team under the leadership of P.Kanagathurai as Theivendra stepped down for a year, was probably the best performed team in the history of St John's. St John's had won 9 out of the 10 matches played that year, including the Big Match and the prestigious Royal College which included great names like Macan Markar, Thalayasingam, Skandakumar and Wilson. Victory in the 10th match (Nalanda) was only missed by a hairpin when the match ended in an interesting draw with 12 runs to be scored by St John's and 4 wickets still left. This team also defeated a Combined All Batticaloa Combined Schools Cricket Team by an innings and 238 runs. 4 Johnian's played in the combined Jaffna School's team. 1966 team was back in Theivendra's hands and St John's had a good season except for losses at the hands of Sylvester's College by a single run and to Royal College playing on turf wickets for the 1st time. Five Johnian's played in the combined school's cricket team.

In 1967, the Johnian team led by yet another fine allrounder C.Sooriyakumar, was unbeaten winning 6 out of the 8 matches drawing only the Big Match and against Nalanda. this team was easily the best batting side ever produced by St John's with scores of 344/3, 345/14, 291/S, 287/9, 281/8 and having 5 innings victories. C Sooriyakumar 3 centuries (Highest score of 181 and an average of 85, M.Surendra (1 century and 2 half centuries, Bala Rajadurai (3 half centuries), T. Vipulananda, S.S. Jeyanayagam and S. Sivakumar with 2 half centuries dominated the batting. Wicket Keeper S.M Moothathamby, T. Vipulananda and Bala Rajadurai with 10 catches each maintained a high fielding profile. Sooriyakumar scored over 500 runs that season for the 2nd year in succession and was rated by many as the best batsman produced in the history of the school. Rightly, he captained the All Jaffna School's team which included 5 Johnians.

1968 team under S.M Moothathamby remained unbeaten winning 6 out of the 7 matches.Vamadevan, a nephew of the great Lingam brothers of the 50's was the find of the season who continued as a genuine fast bowler in the tradition of his uncles capturing 12 wickets in the Big Match.

D Kulanathan, son of a famous Johnian soccerite Duraisamy and nephew of a famous cricketer Duraisingam was showing signs of greatness which he fully realised in the next year. M Surendra, brother of that Theivendra captained St John's in 1969, although could not bring much success for the season, captained the Jaffna School's Team.

The calibre of cricket in St John's produced many cricketers who after leaving school, reached great heights. Dr C.Balakrishnan(1959-1961), played for Bloomfield in the Sara Trophy, was associated in many double century partnerships with Dr Nihal Gurusinghe and was not surprising that he was selected to represent Ceylon and open batting against the Australians. He obliged with a half century. Dr V.Sivananthan, one of the best wicket keepers StJohn's ever produced captained the University at cricket and would have definitely represented Ceylan if not for the great Dr H.I.K Fernando. Siva was in the Ceylon cricket pool for many years. T. Kirubathilagan, Dr DJ.N Selvadurai, M Theivendra and M Surendra captained University in Sara Trophy cricket while C Sooriyakumar, S.M Moothathamby and Rajan Selvanayagam captained Tamil Union, Army and BRC in Sara Trophy cricket respectively. Jeya Vyravipillai and Bala Rajadurai represented Peradeniya University in the Sara Trophy Tournaments in Cricket and won colours. They along with M Theivendra and M Surendra formed 4 out of the 11 players for Peradeniya in the Sara Trophy Tournaments in 1972.

ATHLETICS

Athletics was another sport in which St John's enjoyed a very fruitful decade in the 60's. From 1960 to 1968, in addition to our excellent performances at the inter house sports meets, where all our performers went onto achieve greater fame in the All Jaffna and Public School's meetings, St John's continually won top birth at the Jaffna School's Group 2 meets, setting up many records and winning the Diana Challenge Cup for relays in succession for 7 years. In 1969, even when sports meets were reorganised in line with Ceylon School's Athletic Association, the athletes performed splendidly by always reaching top position.

Even at public schools sports meets, St John's carved its name with some extraordinary performances. In addition to the number of places we obtained, C Satkurunathan was awarded with public school's colours for his achievement in the triple jump in 1961. In 1963, at the public school's meet in Colombo, St John's by winning the Tarbat Cup for outstation schools and the VBM de Silva Cup for field events proved themselves to be the best among outstation schools. They were runners up in the All School's Tarbat Cup and the Dissanayake Cup for field events and just missed the title of being the best in Ceylon by losing to Royal College in the final event of the day. R Ravindrakumar and K Sothilingam for pole vault. M Theivendra for triple and the 120 m hurdles and the relay team excelled and was not surprising that Ravindrakumar, Theivendra and Kanagathurai wan public schools colours.

In 1964, St John's repeated her triumphs of 1963 by winning an the awards for outstation schools. Ravindrakumar, this time passing over the 11 foot mark in pole vault and Theivendra being placed well in the triple, long and the 110 m hurdles event, qualifying again for public schools colours. The public schools meet nearly won us the Tarbat Cup for the 3rd time succession when we missed by 112 a point. Yet Yipulananda one of our fine all round sportsman of the 60's showed his class in his pet long jump event winning public schools colours.

Under the newly structured public schools meet in 1969 R Sivakumar won colours for his achievement in the long jump event and later represented Ceylon Schools against the Indian Schools and grabbed a Silver medal for his achievement in long jump.

SOCCER

Soccer, which is played during the third term of the school calender, although usually provided St John's with limited success in comparisons to our performances in other fields, yet has produced some magnificent players. In 1961, M.W Rajasingam, an acrobatic goal keeper, was rewarded for his skills, when selected to represent the All Jaffna School's Team and in 1962 M

Wjeyaratnam was selected to represent All Ceylon schools against Bangkok while K Mylerumperumal occupied the All Jaffna Schools Centre Half Position.

The soccer team, however in 1967, under the captaincy of S.M Moothathamby, was one of the best soccer teams to be produced by St John's. The 100% wins that season was a repetition of the brilliant performance of the St John's team in 1931. The captain S .M Moothathamby, repeated his achievements in cricket by leading an unbeaten side and went on achieve this feat in basket ball also in the next year. Contrary to our performance of our soccer teams in the early and middle sixties our feats in 1969 were subject to humiliation . One of our great players of the middle sixties, T. Vinayagamoorthy (known as 'China') captained Peradeniya and the combined University at soccer in the early 70's.

OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

Basketball and Hockey had been reintroduced into the school curriculum in late 50's and St John 's immediately responded by providing the Jaffna team with 3 players in 1960. The under 19 Physical Training Squad emerged champions in the All Island School's Competition in the same year.

In 1961, St John's emerged champions in the Eastern Province Tournament played in Batticaloa and the Hockey team provided the Jaffna Team with 3 players. The under 16 P T Squad won the All Jaffna and the All Island competition while the under 13 won the All Jaffna Competition in their respective age groups. With the famous Satyagraha in 1962, these less popular sports did have a natural death but came back to life within the next couple of years, when in 1965 St John's won the Van Twest Cup in Basketball in a tournament where both, schools and clubs, took part. The under 16 Basketball team emerged champions in the North in the same year.

In the Northern Province Schools Championships of 1966, the basketball team consisting of brothers Mahadevan and Shyamasunderam, Moothathamby, Gnanakone. Olagasegarem and Alphonsus emerged champs winning the Subramaniam Shield, while the Badminton team, consisting of C Anandajeya, S Jeyendran and C Sivendran won the runners up title in the North.

The Hockey team produced one player in C Ambihaipalan for the Jaffna Schools team while W. N Guhanandan won 3 titles in the Table Tennis Competition organised by the Jaffna YMCA.

1967 saw the Hockey team win the Jaffna Schools Championships while the Juniors and the Senior Basketball teams won the runners up places. However it was in Badminton that St John's showed overwhelming superiority. They entered 3 teams (A, B &C) for the inter schools tournament in the North. The A team became champions while the B & C were placed 3rd and 4th. Johnians stole the show at a YMCA organised tournament in the same year by winning all trophies. Sivendran, Jeyendran, Theivendra, Surendra and the Veerasingam brothers Noel and Mano proudly represented St John's.

The Basketball team won the Championship in 1968 being unbeaten. The Badminton players again covered themselves with glory. A, B & C triumphed as in 1967, the A team winning the Championship while the B & C were placed 3rd & 4th at the Northern Province Schools Tournament, both in 1968 and 1969. In 1969 in addition they became runners up in the All Schools competition. At Hockey, the senior team were runners up in 1968 and champions in 1969 while the juniors finished runners up in 1969. Four from the senior side represented the All Jaffna Schools Hockey Team.

The dramatic society of St John's too was very active in this decade. In 1960 they produced a highly successful drama, 'Paralum Paddali' and in 1962, 'Kalankarai Theivam' and ' Upstart', in 1963, 'Ithaya Osai', in 1968, 'Veeramainthan' and in 1969, 'Fifty Fifty'. St John's also had two

major musical entertainments, which brought to light the talents of two great artists who were national figures for some time. T Vipulanantha, that famed sportsman was one of them while A.E Manoharan was one many cannot forget for his singing and acting abilities.

THE STAFF

St John's should be proud of their staff during this decade for the supreme standards achieved in many areas. Mr W.T Gunaratnam and Mr Thavarasalingam for Physics, Mr Edwin for Chemistry, Mr Peter Somasundaram and Mr Stephen for Mathematics, Mr Amarasingam for Botany and Mr Anandarajan for Zoology were all known for the manner in which they brought success to the school.

Mr S.K Mahalingam, coaching at Cricket, Soccer and Athletics, Mr James, coaching our P.T Squad and the Boxers, Mr JN Ponniah, Scouting and Basketball and Mr Pararajasingam, for cadeting, all stamped their class.

St John's notes with great sadness the retirement of some of its exponents retiring during this decade. Mr James, Mr Pararajasingam, Rev J.R Ratnanayagam, Mr Peter Somasundaram, Mr W.T Gunaratnam, Mr Stephen and of course Mr A. W Rajasegareem and the death of Mr D. H Chinniah, Mr S. V Eliathamby, Mr E M Ponnudurai, Mr SJ Gunasegareem, Rev J.T Arulanandam, Mr E C A Navaratnarajah, Mr KP Muttiah, Mr KS Manuelpillai, Mr P.T Matthai, Mr G.S Chelliah, Mr S.L Jansen and Mr A.W Rajasegareem.

OLD JOHNIANS IN POLITICS

Maithiripala Senanayake, Member of Parliament

SJ.V Chelvanayagam, Member of Parliament

A. T Durayappah, Member of Parliament

E.M. V Naganathan, Member of Parliament

S.C Mahadeva, Mayor of Jaffna

Note

The writer regrets any errors or omissions

¥ Extracts from the 150th year magazine of SJC were used extensively in compiling this article.