

HOCKEY

Powered by diversity

"OUR strength was in diversity as well as the different backgrounds we came from."

This was what three-time Olympian and former Malaysian hockey captain Mirnawan Nawawi said about the previous national teams who were once regulars in the World Cup and the Olympic Games.



Mirnawan Nawawi

Mirnawan, who hopes the current team will qualify for next year's Olympics, said: "We had players from every race and it made our team stronger as we had different thinking and approaches to a game.

"In the end, we beat the best teams in the world to qualify for the World Cup as well as the Olympics.

"The present team are trying their best to qualify for Tokyo, and I hope they will beat whoever

they are paired against in the final Olympic qualifier.

It has been 19 years since we last played in the Olympics," said Mirnawan.

His former teammates Nor Saiful Zaini, also a triple Olympian, and Madli Ikmar both voiced out the same in June when they questioned: "Where have

the Sikhs, Indians, Chinese and Eurasians gone?"

Mirnawan added: "We had all races in my team. We fought as a family and roared like a tiger together against some of the best in the world.

"So naturally, I would love to see the same at present. I really hope the present team will qualify for Tokyo because if we don't, it would be another painful four years of planning and plotting,"



Mirnawan Nawawi (No 13) with his multiracial teammates at the Sydney 2000 Olympics, the last time Malaysia qualified for the pinnacle of the sport.

said Mirnawan.

Mirnawan, who last represented the country in the 2002 Kuala Lumpur World Cup, played alongside Maninderjit Singh, the late Chua Boon Huat, K. Gobinathan, S. Shankar, K. Keevan Raj, Jiwa Mohan, S. Kuhan and K.

Logan Raj during his heyday.

"When we prayed before a match everybody joined in, and when we were overseas, Calvin Fernandez, Stephen van Huizen and Lim Chiow Chuan (all Olympians) made sure they were at the nearest Church every Sunday.

"The Malay boys never missed their Friday prayers overseas. And the Hindu and Sikh players went to their temples.

"Different minds, different ideas, and different approaches were our strength as Olympians," said Mirnawan. **Jugjet Singh**