The whole school was basking in the glory of the previous year's successes in rugby when the school reopened for the new year 1979. Representing Malaysia at the Asian Schools' Rugby Competition in Haadyai, Thailand in December 1978, the team emerged third best in the region.

The thrilling successes of the 1978 squad left many doubtful as to whether the present squad could retain the national title. It was partly due to this lack of confidence that motivated the squad to train harder and play better. Their achievements this year are now known to all Tigers.

The squad was determined to succeed. Their dedication and determination paid off as they clearly outshone their opponents to retain the national title for the second consecutive year.

Under the able coaching of Mr. Yiew, the rugby team began training immediately after school reopened in January. Training involved undergoing five days a week of weightlifting and skill developing sessions. This strenuous exercises were necessary to ensure that the '79 team maintained the standard of rugby we displayed last year and to improve ourselves for we had our prestige to guard.

This year, we somehow could not maintain the high degree of robust play that so much characterised the 1978 squad. The 1979 team was comparatively robust but they were more suited to play the flowing, sophisticated and fanciful rugby which as we know at the expense of our opponents, was equally effective in dealing with M.C., R.M.C. and S.T.A.R. If we had succeeded in blending the past year's robustness with the newly acquired style of play this year, every opponent we faced would virtually have been devastated!

To kick off the 1979 rugby campaign was the annual match against the Old Edwardians on 11th May. Ironically, we lost the game 7:13. We managed to squeeze in two more friendly matches – against Penang All Blues on 19th May and Bukit Mertajam High School on 4th June – before our major games in the MSSP.'s rugby schedule. Both games were played
away from home. In the one against Penang All Blues, we not only won the match 51:20 but also the praises of our opponents who were so very impressed by our matured play. The next friendly match in Bukit Mertajam was significant in the sense that it was in this game our captain, Jalil, first attempted the drop-kick which accounted for a fair portion of points in the 40:0 trashing of the Bukit Mertajam school. This drop-kick eventually became a major component of the K.E. tactical rugby arsenal.

K.E. VII vs. Vocational School, Kamunting

Our first official game was scheduled for 21st May on the K.E. VII Primary (II) ground against Vocational School. This team that played us was an unskilled lot of inexperienced players who were only introduced to the game last year.

As expected, we easily sailed through this game, winning convincingly 72:3. In this game, the first team played only in the first-half. Due to an agreement between coaches of both schools before the game, any number of substitutions was permitted. Therefore when the whistle blew for second-half, a load of 2nd team players trotted onto the field.

It was largely due to the above that prevented us from surpassing the 102 points scored last year.

K.E. VII vs. St. George’s Institution, Taiping

The day everyone had awaited arrived. The annual showdown on the 27th of May was indeed a special day—both for the Georgians and the Edwardian. For us, it was a matter of prestige while the Georgians were out to avenge their defeat last year.

The afternoon had rained and the ground was soggy. Despite the discouraging weather Tigers, young and old turned up in full force to support their elite XV.

When the referee started the game, our black clad players were confident of an easy win. However the first 10 minutes of the game failed to show any positive move from our boys. The Georgians tried very hard to control the game and their determination was rewarded when they were awarded a penalty. In disbelief, Tiger supporters witnessed the first points scored in the game by the Georgians.

However our Tigers quickly overcame this disadvantage and began the onslaught. Superior in size, weight and strength, our forwards began bulldozing their way through their opponents’ ranks, thus causing much confusion to the Georgian forward line.

The 3 quarters were not left out of the picture either. Having the advantage of speed and skill, they were breaking through rather easily and with little effort.

Points came rushing like an avalanche and when the final whistle blew, we had defeated the school across the drain with an unexpected 82-3 margin thereby retaining the coveted Lal Mahadev trophy and becoming the district rugger champs.

K.E. VII vs. Malay College, Kuala Kangsar

Our first game in the series of inter-district league matches to decide the Perak U-20 rugby champions, was against Malay College, the Kuala Kangsar District champions. This game was played on our school ground on 12th June.

We did not know how strong this year’s M.C. team would be but nevertheless, we were confident of defeating them again. The only question left unanswered was how easy or how difficult it was for us to attain this victory.

The first several minutes of the game resulted in a dead-lock with both teams not making any headway. K.E. had possession of the ball at most times with M.C. making threatening counter-attacks now and then. There was no scoring.
Then it happened! Jalil sent the ball floating over the bar from a penalty taken 27 yards out in the 16th minute, giving us a precious 3 point lead. Inspired by these three points, the forwards pressed harder and were rewarded when Yusuf Tais bashed his way through the M.C. defence to give us a try. Jalil then coolly converted, pushing us six points further. Later into the first-half, a K.E. forward handled the ball on the ground and thus, gave away a penalty which was accurately converted. When the whistle blew for half-time, the score stood at 9:3.

The K.E. team returned to the field determined to increase their lead, and that they did. A penalty within the first 10 minutes of the second half was converted by Jalil (12:3). With the forwards feeding the O’s regularly, it was no surprise when the O’s collected all the points scored in the second-half. A quick, sudden pass of the ball from scrum-half to stand-off Jalil, gave Jalil the necessary time to execute a neatly taken drop-kick which brought cheers and applause from the spectators. The score was now 15:3.

Malay College has always been famous for impressive O’s but in this game, the K.E. O’s outshone them. From a scissors with Jalil, Hamdan breezed into the touch-area in a spectacular run that caught the M.C. defence napping. Jalil duly converted the kick (21:3). Even with a few minutes remaining and with victory in our hands, we kept on playing all out to feed our almost insatiable hunger for more points. Jalil taught the M.C. O’s a thing or two when he sliced, swerved and side-stepped his way through a hoard of black, M.C. jerseys to give us another try near the post. Huzir made no mistake in assuring us of a goal. The final score was 27:3.

K.E. VII vs. Sekolah Tengku Abdul Rahman, Ipoh

Our second inter-district game played on 19th June on our school ground was against the Ipoh District Champions, S.T.A.R. This match was our first since the early seventies.

Fresh from our victory over Malay College, we were confident of brushing aside our next challenge from S.T.A.R. quite easily. Even someone in the S.T.A.R. contingent to Taiping that day admitted that they would lose but they were willing to give their best shot. We all knew that their best wasn’t good enough.

S.T.A.R. kicked off and they did it in “class.” Instead of the normal kick towards the forwards, their stand-off tried something different. He kicked a low ball towards our O’s. It must have been a planned move because their inside centre (who is also their team captain) rushed almost immediately towards the ball to try pick it up. As he was bending down for the ball, he got into the way of the swinging boot of our inside centre, Huzir. There was a collision and the captain was carried out with a broken collar bone.

Our expected easy victory over S.T.A.R. did not come so easily. We had to work hard for every
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inches of ground gained, S.T.A.R. gallantly fought off and neutralised our pressing attacks. It had to take a penalty to give us the lead. Jalil as usual, made it possible.

Faced with this unexpected resistance from our opponents, we somehow could not get our usual standard of play going. We even lost to the smaller S.T.A.R. players in the scrum a number of times in the first-half. A dropkick by Jalil just before the end of the first-half salvaged a bit of our pride. Come half-time, we were only separated by a measly six points from our opponents.

The S.T.A.R. boys probably returned to the field with the hopes of causing an upset burning in their minds. They were not prepared for the avalanche of points that was in store for us.

A break by speedy wing 3-Q, Zainal Abidin, made possible a try near the corner flag. Jalil kicked a fantastic shot to give us two more points (12:0). Our scrum-half, Raja Omar, who so far had a quiet game, got his name on the scorers’ list with a brilliant solo effort involving dazzling footwork and body swerves – the “Raja Omar Waltz” – to try under the post. Jalil converted to make it 18:0. The hard-working forwards kept the pressure on the crumbling S.T.A.R. team. The forwards gained ground and left it to the Q’s to do the damage. Huzir did well to squeeze in a try through a tight defence but Jalil failed to convert the difficult kick that followed (22:0). A beautiful display of accurate passes and fancy footwork by the K.E. Q’s from stand-off to wing 3-Q paved the way for Hakim to touch. Jalil made up for his miss earlier with a nicely taken kick to make the score 28:0. And as if to crown the day’s work by the K.E. machine, team captain Jalil got the last try and converted it himself to make our final tally of points 34.

K.E. VII vs. Sekolah Menengah Iskandar Shah, Parit

The third and last inter-district game, scheduled for 16th June, was against Sek. Men. Iskandar Shah, the champions of the Batu Gajah District.

This team is considered the weakest among the four district champions. Knowing this themselves and knowing also that we had beaten the more superior Malay College and S.T.A.R., it was no surprise when they gave us a walkover. We had obtained maximum points in our three inter-district encounters . . . we were again the state rugby champions!

K.E. VII vs. Sultan Hamid College

The first of two inter-state games to determine the North Malaysian rugby champions. This game, against the Kedah champions, was played away from home on 7th September.

It was very unfortunate that this match was scheduled almost immediately after the fasting month. Due to the lack of training during this fasting month, an unfit team trooped onto the field that evening in Alor Star. We won this game 25:14 but it was a hard-earned victory with some players finding the pace almost torturous at times.

. . . With this victory, we again retained the Taiping Cup for another year.

K.E. VII vs. Bukit Mertajam High School, Bukit Mertajam

Even though we had beaten the very same school 40:0 in June, we expected a tough fight when we left for Bukit Mertajam on 15th September to play them.

Anyway, all our fears amounted to nothing eventually. We coasted to an easy victory; we even surpassed the 40:0 trashing by 15 points.

Our win over this school, the Perang champions, made us the North Malaysian champions and also gave us the ticket to the national finals.

K.E. VII vs. Royal Military College, Sungai Besi

The 1979 Malaysian Schools’ Rugby Final had all the ingredients of an exciting, memorable final but it
turned out to be an anti-climax. It was sad that the true standard of the K.E. team did not manifest itself on that day. Maybe it was due to the atmosphere surrounding the game. The boys were simply awed by the occasion as the finals played in big, busy Kuala Lumpur with Old Edwardians scattered throughout K.L. converging onto the Victoria Institution ground to see them play. Even Peter Martinez himself was there to report the game for Straits Times.

We fared badly in the early beginnings of the game. R.M.C. pupils were there in full force to support their team and their constant, orderly cheering was impressive. It was a wonder how R.M.C. failed to take the lead even with almost everything going their way. Quoting the Sunday Mail, "The teams were still unsettled after 10 minutes of play and failed to make any moves worth calling a threat." More accurate in describing K.E.'s performance. We spent more time in defence then in attacks with R.M.C. getting the better of the initial exchange. It took fullback, Lop Ahmed, to put together all he could muster to fend off the R.M.C. raids. In our rare ventures up-field, a mistake by the R.M.C. scrum-half during a scrum earned us a gift penalty from 35 yards out. Jall made no mistake in giving us 3 points and the all-important lead. The R.M.C. supporters became so silent after this. The performance of the K.E. players did not actually shoot right up after this penalty but things did improve. We gradually regained our confidence and with each passing second, R.M.C. players slowly found themselves losing hold of the game. In the dying minutes of the first half, another R.M.C. mess-up gave us another penalty but a 50-yard one this time. It was one of the most electrifying moment of the game when Jalil kicked a spectacular shot to make the score 3:0. We were very lucky to hold this lead come half-time.

A more confident, steady K.E. returned to the field in the second-half set on demolishing R.M.C. The ground R.M.C. lost in the first-half took its toll during the second-half as they found themselves not being able to get back into the game. They were pinned deep in defence by our pressing forwards. Their hopes of counter-attacking from scrums and line-outs were neutralised by the quick, well-timed breaks of our wing-forwards, Yusuf Mat Arip and Zaidi, which rendered the R.M.C. Q's useless. Even the R.M.C. scrum-half could not manage clean passes because of these breaks. R.M.C. could see victory slipping away.

We scored our first try when Yusuf Tali touched down a loose ball from a Jalil penalty that was kicked from the extreme left side of the field. Jalil then converted easily (12:0). Minutes later, a slip-up by the R.M.C. Q's when passing the ball allowed our out-side-centre, Hamdan, to collect the ball from the ground to dash through unchallenged for another try. Jalil converted again to make the score 18:0. An unfortunate misunderstanding in the K.E. defence made it possible for R.M.C. to break their duck with a goal. The score now stood at 18:6 with a few minutes remaining. Hamdan, an opportunist on the field who has a quick eye for openings in defence, capitalised on another R.M.C. mistake when he intercepted a pass from one R.M.C. Q to another. He then ran unchallenged to touch down near the corner flag. Jalil however missed the difficult conversion that followed. This was the killing blow, there was no time for R.M.C. to fight back. We had won with the final score at 22:6.