

Sudden death ends Sathyan's glorious career

Kannur (Kerala) - Former India football captain V.P. Sathyan defended the Indian soccer team for a decade beginning 1985 and brought several laurels to the country. However, he could not recreate the on-field magic in real life, which he ended abruptly by committing suicide.

Friends and former teammates arrived in large numbers at his home in Tellicherry, Kannur district, in a state of shock. Suicide was the last thing they expected from Sathyan, a strong defender, who was a thorn to many forwards on the football field.

The 42-year-old sportsman committed suicide Tuesday by jumping in front of the Kanyakumari-Chennai Express near Pallavaram on the outskirts of Chennai.

The police found two notes from his pocket. The first said he was ending his life due to financial problems aggravated by his gambling and drinking habits. The second one requested the media not to play up his death.

His sudden demise has left the country's football fraternity in shock.

'I first saw this boy way back in 1980 when he used to come to the Kannur police grounds and practice alone daily. This was a regular feature for a long time,' said K. Kunhiraman, a resident of Kannur who used to train youths at the same ground.

Sathyan, the son of a policeman in Tellicherry, was fascinated by football as a teenager.

Sathyan's journey into the world of football began at the age of 17 when he played his first match for Lucky Star Kannur, a local football club, after which, there was no looking back.

He moved from the Kannur district team to the Kerala Police team in 1983, a year after it was formed.

The next step was the Kerala team and Sathyan was part of the winning Santhosh Trophy team on two occasions. The crowning glory came when he wore the captain's armband for India.

Sathyan led the Indian team in the 1986 Merdeka Tournament, scoring the crucial goal to help beat Korea 4-3. He was also member of the team that took part in the Seoul Asian Games in 1986 and South Asian Federation Games in 1989.

He played at the senior level for 12 years. While with Mohun Bagan club, he was awarded the All India Football Federation (AIFF) Player of the Year award in 1995.

After resigning from the post of deputy superintendent of police in Kerala, he joined the Indian Bank at [Chennai](#) and played for them. Later, he became an assistant manager and its football coach.

Sathyan was coach of the Indian Bank team since 2002 and the team qualified for the National Football League in 2002 and 2003. He was also member of the AIFF selection committee in 2002-03.

Reacting to the demise, former AIFF secretary P.P. Lakshman said the footballer had called him up not very long back to discuss certain things.

'At that point of time, I felt he wanted to discuss aspects of football and now I think he wanted to discuss something completely different. No doubt he is one of the greatest footballers from Kerala,' said Lakhsman.

Sathyan's body was received at Palakkad early Wednesday by a large number of his fans.

Enroute to Tellicherry, the b

ody would be placed at Malappuram and Kozhikode districts for people to pay their last respects.

Kerala chief minister V.S. Achuthanandan said Sathyan would be given a state funeral.

His hometown Tellicherry is all geared up to give a fitting funeral later Wednesday and bid a tearful adieu to one of its favourite sons.

Sathyan is survived by his mother, wife and daughter.

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