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A work in progress

Bolts coach says his boys' spirits still high despite rout

By S. SAKTESH

PETALING JAYA: There is no shame in defeat, at least for TNB Thunderbolts.

The youth squad under coach M. Kaliswaran took a 0-6 beating from the more superior Tenaga Nasional in the Malaysian Hockey League (MHL) but it didn't dampen their spirits at the National Stadium in Bukit Jalil yesterday.

Despite the thrashing, Kaliswaran took the defeat on the chin as he chose to look at the big picture. "My team is a development team, and they went up against a team with almost 20 players who are in the national team and carry about 300 to 400 caps," said Kaliswaran.

"Even though we had quite a few open goal chances, we didn't convert them, but my boys still gave a good performance."

Tenaga took the lead early in the game, with veteran South Korean Jang Jong-hyun scoring from a penalty corner in the 11th minute.

More penalty corners followed as the ruthless Jong-hyun converted two while Syed Syafiq Syed Mohd Cholan and Mohd Firhan Ashari slotted one each. The sole field goal for Tenaga came in the final quarter, courtesy of Nik Airman Nik Rozemi.

Kaliswaran said the team did well to hold off the seniors in the first half, but fatigue played a role in his charges letting three goals slip past in the final quarter.

"They did well in the first and second quarters, but in the second half they got tired, which led to them making mistakes.

"They are young boys and



Making his move: Tenaga Nasional's Mohd Firhan Ashaari (centre) tries to dribble the ball past TNB Thunderbolts players during the Malaysian Hockey League match. — GLENN GUAN/The Star

when they grew tired, they probably were unable to follow instructions well, and that caused us to concede a few more goals," he said.

He said Jong-hyun's expertise in penalty corners made all the difference for Tenaga.

"If you remove him from the game today, the match may have turned into a tight game. Penalty corner is his specialty, that is why Tenaga got him.

"But for my young boys this is exposure. We should let them feel how tough it is out there because this is what they will be facing on the international level one day," he said.

The Thunderbolts had won their first league match 2-1 against Liaoning and will now prepare for their next encounter against KL City on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, Tenaga head coach Norsaiful Zaini wasn't pleased with his team despite the huge scoreline.

"Yes we won 6-0 but when I looked back at the game I am not satisfied. There were many things we would have to work on, especially the team's coordination on the pitch," he said.

"There were a number of misses in front of goal. We have mostly national players so I think they should have played better."

TNB MHL		MALAYSIAN HOCKEY LEAGUE	
RESULTS			
Y. ELEPHANTS	0	LIAONING	2
JM ANTBEES	2	A. FORCES	6
TENAGA	6	T'BOLTS	0
NURINSAFI	5	KL CITY	0

Tenaga will play Terengganu next on Wednesday.

In the other matches today, Liaoning defeated the Young Elephants 2-0, while the Armed Forces squad won 6-2 against the JM Antbees.