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Up to speed with Tigers

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Spotlight

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Veteran Marhan won't think of slowing down in busy year

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PETALING JAYA: Marhan Jalil has spent years being at the heart of the national hockey team.

Through changing squads, different head coaches, and various challenges of international competition, the veteran midfielder has remained a constant presence for the Speedy Tigers.

But with time, Marhan's perspective has also shifted.

With 348 international caps and just one shy from being the country's new record holder, the 36-year-old admits that thoughts about the latter stages of his career sometimes pop up, but he is not dwelling on what comes next just yet as there are big things coming this year.

"These past few years, the thoughts about the ending stages of my career have definitely crossed my mind," said Marhan.

"It's normal for a player with the experience and age like



myself to think about it.

"But for now, I'm not spending too much time pondering about it." With big tournaments coming up, what's really on my mind is getting positive results for the team.

"I want to make Malaysia proud and ensure Malaysian hockey moves forward after each tournament."

Marhan can surpass former national captain Azlan Mison's record of 349 caps when he leads the team at the Nations Cup in South Africa from June 11-20.

Malaysia will then compete at the World Cup in Holland from



Aug 14-30, followed by the Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya from Sept 19-Oct 4.

For Marhan, every tournament is an opportunity to push Malaysian hockey into the spotlight, and beyond the performance and results, his 15-year journey with The Speedy Tigers has also deepened his appreciation for those who tell his story.

As The Star celebrates its 55th anniversary, Marhan thanked the publication for its continued coverage of the national hockey team.

"As a player, I really appreciate the news coverage of the team. It doesn't just tell a story,



A milestone: Marhan Jalil (right) has 348 international caps and is just one shy from being the country's new record holder.

but helps raise the profiles of many players.

"Without that coverage, those outside the sporting circle may not know much of what's going on with our athletes who are competing for the nation's pride overseas or even locally.

"When we achieve good results, it means a lot that reporters who follow us are the first to report it," said Marhan.

Even when results do not go their way, Marhan views coverage, positive or not, as part of the process.

"I take it as something positive that reminds us we need to work even harder. Healthy criticism happens everywhere and we know it's us who can make a difference out there.

"It allows us to reflect on ourselves and pushes us forward,"

he said.

Domestically, the seasoned midfielder has been playing a vital role in the Malaysian Hockey League (MHL) with Thunderstars.

The team dethroned Terengganu to win the Charity Shield last month, and are sitting in second place in the league with nine points, behind Maybank with 13 points.

"Our performance this season has been good so far. We've been able to adapt well with what the coach wants and results have been good too.

"There are of course some minor weaknesses that we need to work on. If we can plug those gaps, we can reach our full potential.

"We're aiming for the league title and the TNB Cup," he said.