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Azim: Dad one's for you

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Malaysian forward dedicates goal to his ailing father

By S. SAKTESH

IPOH: It didn't take long for youngster Azimuddin Syakir Kamaruddin to score his first goal for the national team, but he wishes there was someone special in the stands to witness him do it.

The 19-year-old forward, who is making his international debut with the national squad at the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup, scored his first goal for The Speedy Tigers in their second fixture against Canada on Sunday.

It was a bittersweet moment for Azimuddin as his cancer-stricken father was not present at the Azlan Shah Stadium here to witness his son score his first goal.

"I know he watched the game on the television. He called me after the first match and apologised for not being able to make it here to watch me play," said Azimuddin after their win against Canada.

"But I told him that I understand his situation and why he

FIXTURES	
TODAY	
CANADA vs S. KOREA	(4pm)
PAKISTAN vs JAPAN	(6.15pm)
MALAYSIA vs N. ZEALAND	(8.30pm)

can't come. But I wanted to prove to him that I can play for the Speedy Tigers.

"I dedicate my first goal to my father and I'll be sure to call him and say that more goals will be coming in the next game," he said.

His father, Kamaruddin Misman, is the current Johor junior team coach and former midfielder for the Armed Forces (ATM) from 1992 to 2003.

Azimuddin scored Malaysia's third goal in their 6-2 win against Canada after directing the ball into the back of the net through an assist from Muhajir Abdu Rauf in the 19th minute.

The Johor-born player got his first debut for the national squad



I did it!: Malaysia's Azimuddin Syakir Kamaruddin celebrates after scoring against Canada during the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup. — RONNIE CHIN/The Star

in their opening fixture against Pakistan, where he came close to scoring but was denied by the defence.

Pakistan won the match 5-4 on Saturday.

The TNB Thunderbolts player said the nerves were kicking in during the first game, but was determined to do better.

"After I missed the chance, I told myself before sleeping that I would try to score at least one goal against Canada," he said.

"I don't feel nervous anymore after the first match, I felt impa-

tient to get on the field and start playing."

The teenager added that playing side-by-side with his idol Faisal Saari has been a dream come true.

"I first saw him play when I was nine, and getting to play with him on the national team makes me feel so fortunate.

"His ball control is so good, it's almost as if he's best friends with the stick," he said.

Azimuddin will get the chance to increase his goal count when Malaysia face New Zealand today.