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Bolt from the blue dashes Amirul's aspirations

By AFTAR SINGH

KUALA LUMPUR: Youngster Mohd Amirul Hamizan Azahar had wanted to use the Malaysia Hockey League (MHL), which begins tomorrow, to impress the national selectors – but his dreams have received a huge jolt.

The Tenaga Nasional defender broke his knee cap during a friendly match against their junior side TNB Thunderbolt last week.

The Penang-born penalty corner specialist was the star in the Malaysian Junior Hockey League last year when he netted 26 goals to help Tunku Mahkota Ismail Sports School to bag the league and overall titles.

The 19-year-old Amirul said he has always wanted to play for the country and was looking forward to impressing the national selectors and get his first call-up for training.

"But my dreams are shattered now. I never expected to get hit by the ball. I don't know how long it will take me to recover," said Amirul, who will go for another medical check-up on Jan 20.

The MHL begins tomorrow and the final is scheduled for Feb 29.

National chief coach Roelant Oltmans will use the MHL to call up players for training before the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup in Ipoh from April 11-18.

Amirul, who has been playing in the MHL since 2017, is unlikely to play any matches in the league this year.

"Without playing, I can forget about the national call-up. I hope to recover in time to play for the National Juniors in the Junior Asia Cup in Dhaka from June 4-14," said Amirul, who helped Malaysia win their first-ever gold in the Youth Olympics Games in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 2018.

The Junior Asia Cup is the qualifying tournament for next year's Junior World Cup.

Tenaga, meanwhile, will not be too severely affected by Amirul's absence as they seek to win one of the two titles this season.

Tenaga are powered by 13 national players and should be good enough to give league champions UniKL and overall champions Terengganu a run for their money.