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Fear of derailment

Tenaga wary of Indian Railways team turning party poopers

By K.M. BOOPATHY

PETALING JAYA: Star-studded Tenaga Nasional are settling in fine in the Malaysian Hockey League's (MHL) title chase but they are well aware of Nurinsafi's ability to disrupt their rhythm.

That's why they will not underestimate the northern side in a crucial match at the National Hockey Stadium in Bukit Jalil today.

Nurinsafi, a Sungai Petani club but who have made Bertam, Penang as their training base, have made a fine start in the league by winning four of their five matches to remain second with 12 points.

Their only blemish is a 1-4 defeat to league leaders Maybank on Wednesday.

They are shaping up well, thanks to the presence of six players from the Indian Railways, one of the top hockey teams in the sub-continent.

Tenaga are powered by 12 national players and South Korean international Jang Jong-hyun but their striker Azrai Aizad Abu Kamal is being cautious.

"Nurinsafi are playing well this season and have several guest players from India who can challenge our team. We cannot underestimate them," said Azrai.

"Most of our players have been down after the setback during the Olympic Qualifiers in Oman (last month) where we could not qualify for Paris 2024.

"We are slowly getting back our form and we need to keep improving and cannot afford to lose points against Nurinsafi in our push to fight for the league title."

Coached by Indian Railways handler Prem Kumar and strengthened by his players Patil Veerannagouda, Joginder Singh, Hartaj Singh, Punith Rangegowda, Kuwardilraj Singh and Shamanth Chowdlu Sathish, Nurinsafi are

TNB MHL MALAYSIAN HOCKEY LEAGUE	
TODAY'S MATCHES	
TENAGA NASIONAL vs NURINSAFI (National Hockey Stadium, Pitch 1, 4pm)	
KL CITY vs MAYBANK (National Hockey Stadium, Pitch 2, 4pm)	
Y. ELEPHANTS vs T'BOLTS (Wisma Belia, Kuantan, 5pm)	
LIAONING vs JM ANTBEES (National Hockey Stadium, Pitch 1, 6pm)	
UITM vs TERENGGANU (National Hockey Stadium, Pitch 2, 6pm)	
P	W D L F A Pts
MAYBANK	5 4 1 0 27 4 13
NURINSAFI	5 4 0 1 16 10 12
T. NASIONAL	5 3 2 0 32 7 11
TERENGGANU	4 3 1 0 16 6 10
UITM	4 3 0 1 15 8 9
A. FORCES	6 2 0 4 13 20 6
T' BOLTS	5 2 0 3 9 16 6
KL CITY	4 1 0 3 13 17 3
Y. ELEPHANTS	4 1 0 3 5 13 3
LIAONING	5 1 0 4 7 23 3
JM ANTBEES	5 0 0 5 7 36 0

looking forward to a top four finish in the league this year.

However, their team manager S. Thatchana Murthy said that Tenaga would be just too strong for Nurinsafi.

"We want to be realistic in our push to try and finish in the top four. Tenaga are actually our national senior team playing in the MHL," said Thatchana.

"Nurinsafi have five more matches to play and need to focus on collecting full points.

"We've to keep the score down and also try to avoid players from getting injuries as it will hamper the chances of a small team like us to do well in this event. We may lose some matches on our way but we want to finish as high as we can."



Hotshot: Tenaga National's Azrai Aizad Abu Kamal bagged five goals in the team's 13-1 rout of Liaoning in a MHL match on Wednesday. — MHC

The others in the team are former international Tengku Ahmad Tajuddin Tengku Jalil, national hockey 5s goalkeeper Che Sharul Azmi Che Saupi and former national team trainee Nur Rahull Hrsikesa Thaitchana Muruthi.

Meanwhile, Maybank should consolidate their top position with a win over KL City while Terengganu, currently in fourth place, are expected to beat UiTM today to continue their challenge for the league title.