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TNB leads charge in hockey excellence

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Thunderbolts programme fuels Malaysian hockey development

As the country celebrates Malaysia Day, the role of sports as a unifying force is as important as ever. It's "Malaysia United" as our fans rally behind our national teams and national athletes on the international arena.

While TNB is a household name when it comes to electricity, its vaunted TNB Thunderbolts hockey programme is also well-wired into nation-building through sport.

For thousands of youngsters across Malaysia, the hockey field is more than just a place to play their favourite sport; it can change their lives for the better.

But when faced with challenges in life, it's not easy for them to build a future through hockey.

It is worth noting that since 2006, the TNB Thunderbolts development programme has become a beacon of hope for youths from underprivileged backgrounds, offering them a way out to a better future.

The programme does not only provide training for athletes, it shapes individuals.

It has helped develop youngsters who had never set foot on a synthetic pitch before to become international players.

The unique programme not only creates quality players for the Malaysia Hockey Confederation (MHC), it also forges forward-thinking leaders.

The TNB Thunderbolts programme



More than RM4.8 million has been invested in national hockey development, benefiting 15,750 players through the Malaysian Hockey Confederation, training clinics and equipment support. PIC FROM TNB THUNDERBOLTS

began with one dream — to change lives.

Each year, 1,200 school children join the initiative, and only 120 of them are selected for its intensive development phase.

Selection is not based on who is the best player, but on who is willing to train hard, day in, day out.

Rural children, who once ran barefoot on laterite roads, are given sports equipment, full nutrition and academic guidance.

The TNB Thunderbolts programme, which is open to all youths, is designed to help shape their lives for the better.

Many of these children, who come from B40 families, are taught about training, techniques, diet, academics as well as moral values.

In this season's Malaysia Indoor Hockey League, TNB Thunderbolts proved the effectiveness of their programme in producing skilful and mentally strong players as their team fought back from 3-0 down to overcome Maybank on penalties in the

final.

That speaks volumes about the quality of the programme. Behind every Thunderbolts goal scored, is a story of blood, sweat and tears — sacrifices made by their players, coaches and staff in the pursuit of sporting excellence.

Notably, the TNB Thunderbolts programme does not end at the school level as its players continue to train at the senior level, and many of them have gone on to represent Malaysia.

Playing a major role in Malaysia's hockey development, the TNB Thunderbolts six-a-side and seven-a-side tournaments feature over 1,200 players from 121 teams from across the nation at Padang Kilat TNB in Kuala Lumpur.

For Thunderbolts coaches, their roles go far beyond teaching techniques and strategies. They are like "second parents" to the players, ensuring they stay focused in honing their skills and realising their true potential.

The recent appointment of Olympian Nor Saiful Zaini as national junior team head coach has further strengthened TNB Thunderbolts' link with the national squad.

Former national hockey captain Sukri Abdul Mutalib, now a coach, said the TNB Thunderbolts programme has played a huge role in developing hockey talent.

"TNB's support has been essential for schools and players as it has helped cover expenses for equipment, training programmes and tournament participation," said Sukri.



The appointment of Olympian Nor Saiful Zaini as national junior team head coach has further strengthened TNB Thunderbolts' link with the national squad. NSTP FILE PIC



Former national captain Sukri Abdul Mutalib says the TNB Thunderbolts programme has played a huge role in developing hockey talent.

"The Thunderbolts programme gives young players the chance to compete at national level in junior competitions. It also provides access to quality coaching from former national players and even TNB staff who can pass on their knowledge."

"Many players have come through thanks to the cooperation between national and state sports schools and the Thunderbolts programme."

Sukri, who also teaches at Bukit Jalil Sports School, added that the initiative has not only nurtured players but also strengthened community ties.

"We always promote unity among the players and we have boys from many races in the programme," he said.

"Selection is always based on merit. Players must earn their place in the team. We do not tolerate racism."

"In fact, the programme has become a community effort. Parents of all races chip in — some record matches for analysis, others help with transport when we travel for games. It's a real community effort, and that's what makes us special."

The strong cooperation between TNB, the Education Ministry and MHC has also resulted in a comprehensive support system for the sport here.

With the TNB Thunderbolts programme powering national hockey, the Speedy Tigers hope to sparkle on the world stage like what the Malaysia team did in the 1970s.

What started as a corporate social responsibility project, has led to TNB Thunderbolts fuelling Malaysia's hockey development.

It's possible that one day, a Thunderbolts player ends up standing on the Olympic podium as a member of the national team with a medal around his or her neck.



BJSS Thunderbolts won this year's Malaysian Junior Hockey League. PIC FROM TNB THUNDERBOLTS