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HOCKEY

Women ready for battle at Pantai

NINE teams will compete for honours in the TNB-Women's Razak Cup, which starts today at KLHA Stadium in Pantai.

They are defending champions Pahang, Indonesia, Armed Forces, KL, Terengganu, Perak, Johor, Selangor and Melaka.

Police, Sarawak, Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan, Penang, Sabah and Negri Sembilan are absent as they do not have enough players due to the SPM examination.

"It all boils down to proper planning and having a league within their states to find players with talent that could make up a team to participate," said KL Hockey Association vice-president K. Maheswari.

"We are grateful to the teams that agreed to participate. Those who opted out have deprive their players an opportunity to excel in this top quality competition."

Maheswari said because of the unpredictable weather conditions, all matches have been moved forward by an hour.

Pahang start as the favourites in the tournament. The east coast side have the services of national players — Siti Noor Amarina Ruhani, midfielder Wan Norfaiezah Saiuti, drag-flick specialist Nuraini Rashid, Rabiatul Adawiyah Mohamed, S. Priyangga, Siti Zaidah and Fatin Naimah along with ex-international Nadia Abdul Rahman.

But Terengganu, who have the wily Harun Al Rashid as coach, could spring a surprise although they have opted for a team that comprise largely of players who will represent them in the Malaysia Games next year.

Johor could surprise as they aim to make the semi-finals after finishing eighth last year. They have national assistant coach Lailin Abu Hassan as coach and have players with experience in Norafiza Sulaiman, Marlia Mohamed, Noor Hayati Sirkam, Nurul Nadia Aziz and Fatin Nabilah Husna Mansor.

And with the inclusion of national keeper Farah Ayuni Yahya, Johor are the team to watch.

For KL, they will rely on Norazlin Sumantri , who on her day can win a match single handedly, to make the semi-finals. Others that could make an impression are Armed Forces and Melaka.

Groupings

Group A — Pahang, KL, Perak, Terengganu, Indonesia

Group B — Armed Forces, Selangor, Melaka, Johor

Fixtures

Today

Group A — Pahang v Terengganu (3pm), KL v Perak (7pm)

Group B — Armed Forces v Johor (5pm)

*all matches at KLHA Stadium

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