

Headline	MHL season set to kickstart with a bang		
MediaTitle	New Straits Times		
Date	19 Aug 2016	Language	English
Circulation	74,711	Readership	240,000
Section	Sport	Page No	32
ArticleSize	180 cm ²	Journalist	N/A
PR Value	RM 9,765		



HOCKEY

MHL season set to kickstart with a bang

WITH three pieces of silverware up for grabs, the Malaysia Hockey League (MHL) Premier Division is set to be a thriller from today.

At stake are the Premier League title, the Tan Sri P. Alagendra Cup and the TNB Cup to keep fans at the edge of their seats.

The MHL season will start with the Charity Shield clash between double champions Terengganu Hockey Team (THT) and Kuala Lumpur Hockey Club (KLHC) at the Batu Buruk Stadium in Kuala Terengganu today.

And the four other challengers in the Premier Division are Tenaga Nasional, Sapura HC, Universiti Kuala Lumpur (UniKL) and Maybank.

Buoyed by the return of Sharun Nabil from injury, Terengganu HT will remain the team to beat on the back of their Razak Cup win in May.

The midfielder, who has been out for nine months with a left knee injury, is back and wants to return to winning ways as team captain.

THT skipper Sharun believes that

his defenders will have to be extra vigilant against KLHC, as they have experienced South Korean dragflicker Hyunwoo Nam on their side.

"Defensively we all need to work together. We can't give away too many penalty corners, because we all know he (Hyunwoo) can put them away," he added.

Last year's runners-up KLHC are hoping to hit the ground running but coach Harun Al-Rahid Samri knows it will not be an easy task against an established opponent.

"I finally got my full squad yesterday (Thursday) after our three foreign players from Pakistan arrived. Ali Shan and Umar Bhutta played for us last year while Khan Abdul Haseem is a newcomer.

"So with two days to prepare before we begin competing may not be enough against THT who are among the stronger sides in the tournament. They have been together for two years and they have very good players in their squad," said Harun.

Meanwhile, despite facing an up-

hill task in the Premier Division of the MHL, University Kuala Lumpur (UniKL) are optimistic about their chances.

They will open their campaign against Sapura today at the Tun Razak Stadium. Ironically, it was Sapura who ousted UniKL in the quarterfinal stage of the MHL last season.

UniKL lost two key youngsters in Haziq Shamsul and Meor Mohammad to KL Hockey Club this season and have registered a full complement of six foreign players.

They are Irishmen James Carr (goalkeeper), Luke Madeleya and Daragh Walsh, German Patrick Schultz, Pakistan's Mohammad Tousiq and Australian Adrian Coster.

"We have a young team that have been working hard over the past few weeks with a target to play in the semi-finals," said UniKL coach Arul Selvaraj.

TODAY — Premier League: THT v Kuala Lumpur HC (Batu Buruk Stadium, 6pm); Sapura HC v UniKL (Tun Razak, 6pm); TNB v Maybank (KLHA Stadium, 6pm).