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KILAT Veterans managed to pull off a hat-trick of wins with their third consecutive triumph at the Rom Star Kelab Aman Veteran 9s Football Tournament 2017, after a dramatic 1-0 win over HTC FC at Kelab Aman in Kuala Lumpur.

Both teams were evenly matched in skill. HTC's threatening midfield play was effective in feeding the ball into Kilat's penalty box on numerous occasions but the resolute Kilat defence stood firm despite being under pressure.

Kilat Veterans' breakthrough came early in the 20-minute final when former Kelantan state player Alif Rohamin was able to give HTC's defence the slip as he scored in the fourth minute.

As the pace picked up, Kilat were able to control the game but the HTC veterans pressed hard for the equaliser.

HTC looked sure to draw level with just five minutes left on the clock when former Sarawak and national player Bobby Pian found the ball just outside the penalty box.

His screamer caught the keeper off guard, but the ball struck the left post and deflected towards the right, missing by inches.

Kilat Veterans team manager Azlan David was on cloud nine after the final whistle, admitting that the final was a close call.

He commended his squad for following his instructions strictly by marking the opposition with discipline and playing a fast game.

"We had some difficulty in the earlier rounds because most of the players were new and we played with just one substitute, but we managed to improve and conquered the tournament," said Azlan, a supervisor with Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB).

"We have to thank the TNB management for their support to take part in the competition.

"It was not easy to win three years in a row. All the finals were equally tough but we are happy.

"After scoring, we played cautiously and maintained possession. Our defenders played a marvellous game," he added.

The plate final was also a close match with both teams performing well but a 0-0 deadlock in regulation time meant the match had to be decided on penalties, which saw Club X edging KL Wednesday 4-3 for the title.

Meanwhile, teams SISC and TM Jones along with JJE and Pemuda Sentul finished joint third in the cup and plate pools respectively.

The veteran tournament, sponsored by Rom Star Sdn Bhd, was held in conjunction with Malaysia Day and met with overwhelming response, with 21 teams coming

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from as far as Johor Baru, Kelantan and Penang to participate.

Former international Ho Hon Seong, along with a host of other former state and international players also took part as they proved that they still had it in them.

"We tend to have a good number of teams interested in our competition and because of the popularity of this event we get to choose the teams taking part," said organising chairman Anthony Pathinathan.

"We always try to coincide with Malaysia Day because of the *muhibbah* factor our competition has with the Chinese, Indian and Malay teams participating.

"The interactions off the pitch are lively and friendly and the players have a good time on the pitch too.

"Many of the players are ex-state and national players and everybody is passionate about football. So there is a good mix of everything."

He thanked Rom Star managing director and chief executive officer Baharom Hamzah for sponsoring the tournament for the last three years.

"He has been very supportive of our efforts as he has a great passion for the game and to bring all of us together and for that we thank him," he added.

The Kilat Veterans team lifting the trophy in delight after winning the title for the third time at the Rom Star Kelab Aman Veteran 9s Football Tournament at Kelab Aman. — Photos: SHAARI CHE MAT/The Star



Plate champions Club X with (from left) SSU Kelab Aman president Gagandeep Singh and Baharom.



KL Wednesday FC (white and red jersey) and Club X in action during the plate final which KL Wednesday won on penalties.



The nail-biting final between equally matched Kilat Veterans (in grey) and HTC FC.