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HOCKEY

THT, Sapura confident

DATELINE TERENGGANU Hockey Team (THT) have no plans to pull the brakes in the TNB Cup semi-finals, second leg today, even though they have a five-goal cushion over Maybank.

And Sapura coach Yahya Atan feels his players' desire to play in the final will be the key to beating Kuala Lumpur Hockey Club (KLHC) again in their return leg.

Both the return legs will be played at the Kuala Lumpur Hockey Stadium, where THT hammered Maybank 6-1 and Sapura beat KLHC 3-1 on Wednesday.

"A five-goal cushion can be overcome in modern hockey, but we are not about to let it happen. Even though the final is after just a day's break following the second leg, I will field my best players to stabilise the match before deciding on changes," said THT coach Sarjit Singh.

THT, double champions the last two seasons, have already won the League title and are looking good to defend the TNB Cup as well.

As for Sapura: "My players showed more desire than our opponents in the first leg and even though we hold a slim lead, I believe it will be the same performance from us in the second leg to cement our spot.

"It has been too long since we last won the TNB Cup (2006) and we are just two steps away. It will not be easy, but not an impossible dream either," said Yahya.

KLHC have been bogged down by injuries, and the fact that two of

their top players could only play for 30 minutes this season saw them struggle with a skeleton crew.

Razie Rahim, the nation's top penalty corner flicker, and national midfielder Nabil Fiqri joined police training and the team suffered badly.

When asked about his heavy-footed players in the first leg, KLHC coach Harun Rashid said fatigue, injuries and work commitments left him with a thin squad on the bench.

"Fatigue is always an issue with a thin squad and a packed schedule playing, midweek as well (Alagenda Cup).

"Umar Bhutta (Pakistan import) didn't play the first leg due to a foot injury, Syamim Yusof and Kevin Lim are carrying hamstring injuries.

"Nam Hyun Woo is nursing a back injury, while Rashid Baharom's shoulder is injured.

"However, as long as we have the time and opportunity, a comeback is always possible in a two-leg race. It's not how one starts, the finishing is more important," reasoned Rashid.

"It has been too long since we last won the TNB Cup (2006) and we are just two steps away. It will not be easy, but not an impossible dream either,"

Yahya Atan
Sapura coach

TODAY — TNB Cup Semi-finals, 2nd leg: Kuala Lumpur HC (1) v Saura HC (3) (KLHA, 6pm), Maybank (1) v Terengganu HT (6) (KLHA, 8pm).

President's Cup Semi-finals, 2nd leg: SSTMI (3) v UiTM-KPT (4) (Tun Razak, 6pm), Politeknik (2) v TNB Thunderbolts (3) (Tun Razak, 8pm).

Vivian Soars Cup Semi-finals, 2nd leg: ATM Pernama (0) v Blue Warriors (1) (Ministry of Education, 6pm), PKS-Uniten-KPT (0) v SSTMI (2) (Ministry of Education, 8pm) — 1st leg scores in parenthesis. **By Jugjet Singh**