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HOCKEY

Tenaga ready for trouble

TENAGA Nasional are ready for their biggest challenge this season when they face Kuala Lumpur Hockey Club (KLHC) in the second leg of the Malaysia Hockey League (MHL) TNB Cup today.

In the first leg, a 60th minute goal by Syamim Yusof gave KLHC a slim one-goal advantage – which Tenaga assistant coach M. Kaliswaran believes can be overturned.

The other semi-final is still an open affair as defending TNB Cup champions Terengganu Hockey Team (THT) drew 4-4 with a fighting Universiti Kuala Lumpur (UniKL).

KLHC have won the Charity Shield and League title, and will be gunning for the treble while THT have the Alagendra Cup this season.

Even though Tenaga relied on local players, with 12 of them under 21 years old, they still managed to finish fourth in the League and are now a fighting contender for the TNB Cup final.

“We have no problems fielding all local players in a league where many teams have hired foreign players to beef up their campaign. We have always believed in locals, and they have not disappointed us,” said Kaliswaran.

And out of the 12, Hafizhuddin Zaidi, Adrian Andy Albert and Luqman Nul Hakim are just 19 years old.

“Our young players have shown

that they are capable of matching the best but inexperience has hampered their progress in the semi-circle.

“They did have some great chances to win the first leg, but froze at the final moments. But I believe they can upset the one-goal lead which is nothing in modern hockey,” said Kaliswaran.

Tenaga lost 3-2 to KLHC in the Alagendra Cup round of 16, but held the League champs to 2-2 and 3-3 draws in the home-and-away league.

As for KLHC, team manager Ahmad Anuar Sham said: “A one-goal lead is not enough going into the second leg, and we have to play much better than we did previously to make an attempt at the TNB Cup as well.”

UniKL coach Arul Selvaraj will also be on his toes, together with his players. “We wasted an opportunity to win the first leg by letting in quick goals after taking the lead. We need to be more focused and not lose concentration as that was our only fault.”

THT coach Sarjit Singh was of the same opinion. “I have told my players to forget the 4-4 draw and play the second leg as if it’s the final itself. We have lost the League, and can’t afford another slip-up in the TNB Cup,” said Sarjit.

TODAY, Semi-finals second leg:
UniKL (4) v Terengganu HT (4) (Tun Razak, 6pm), Tenaga (0) v Kuala Lumpur HC (1) (Tun Razak, 8pm).
Jugjet Singh