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Keeping the fire burning

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Hockey hero Faizal retires but will stick around to do more at lower level

TNB CUP FINAL

TERENGGANU 1 TENAGA 1
(Terengganu won 3-0 in penalty shootout)

THIRD-PLACE PLAYOFF

MAYBANK 2 MATADOR 1

By S. SAKTESH

PETALING JAYA: Malaysia's top scorer Faizal Saari wants to spend his time giving back to the sport at the grassroots level after toiling hard for the nation over the last 15 years.

The 34-year-old announced his retirement on Saturday after helping Terengganu win the TNB Cup by defeating Tenaga Nasional 3-0 in a penalty shoot-out.

The penalty came from Faizal, his brother Fitri and Syarman Mat Tee at the National Hockey Stadium in Bukit Jalil.

Both teams were tied 1-1 through goals from Arif Syafie Ishak of Terengganu and Jang Jong-hyun of Tenaga respectively at the end of 60 minutes.

Faizal said he intends to open a hockey academy in Pandamaran, Klang after the Hari Raya celebrations.

"I do have plans after this, and that is to do coaching. I want to

focus on setting up my academy which will be based in Klang," said Faizal.

Faizal marked an end to his illustrious national career by capping a marvelous season for Terengganu in the Malaysian Hockey League (MHL) by capturing their treble. They had earlier won the league and also the Charity Shield.



Contrasting emotions: The Terengganu hockey team celebrate after winning the TNB Cup but there was little joy for their top scoring hero Faizal Saari (left) who is quitting the national team. — Bernama

He was crowned as the top scorer after scoring 32 goals in 12 matches, with 14 of those being field goals.

Faizal said he wants to make room for the younger generation to take their place in the national team, but will miss the time he has spent with the Speedy Tigers.

"I have already given my letter to the Malaysian Hockey Confederation (MHC), so after this fans will no longer see me in the national team anymore.

"Fifteen years is a long time, filled with ups and downs, good and rough times with the team. "But it is about time for me to step away and give the younger players their chance to represent Malaysia.

"I'm thankful for all the coaches who have helped me, all the staff and management, everyone who has been there for me. I will be the Speedy Tigers' number one fan," said Faizal, who has a total of 302 caps for the country.

Faizal will continue playing for

Terengganu in the Malaysian Hockey League (MHL) and Tun Abdul Razak Cup.

Faizal was part of the national squad that won silver medals at the 2010 Guangzhou and 2018 Jakarta-Palembang Asian Games.

He is also one of two players who played in the Australian Hockey League with the Southern Hotshots in 2011 and scored three goals in the league.

In the third-place playoff of the TNB Cup, Maybank edged Matador 2-1.