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Sport

River Blue storm ahead

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Underdogs stun unbeaten favourites

River Blue Kuala Selangor come from behind to upset fancied opponents in hockey final

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RIVER Blue Kuala Selangor put up a gutsy display to emerge Division Three champions in the TNB-QNET Selangor Hockey League (SHL).

River Blue Kuala Selangor came from a goal down to defeat IIUM Mustang 4-1 in the final at the Petaling Jaya City Council (MBPJ) Hockey Stadium.

It was a dramatic end to the match as River Blue Kuala Selangor's goals came in the last 10 minutes of the game.

IIUM Mustang, the only unbeaten team in Division Three, were expected to have an easy ride past River Blue Kuala Selangor in the final.

And IIUM Mustang took the lead in the 23rd minute when Mohammad Noraiman Azman scored from a penalty corner.

IIUM Mustang, encouraged with the lead, were looking for more goals but River Blue Kuala Selangor goalkeeper Mohd Aizat Ali was in fine form. He was easily one of the most impressive players on the pitch and kept the IIUM forwards at bay.

After weathering IIUM Mustang's onslaught for the major part of the game, River Blue Kuala Selangor equalised in the 54th minute when Mohd Faiz Mohd Nooh scored from a penalty corner.

River Blue Kuala Selangor, coached by R. Logeswaran, were inspired and took the lead two minutes later. Once again it was Mohd Faiz as his stinging shot, from a penalty corner, sailed into goal.

River Blue Kuala Selangor continued to have the upperhand and did not allow IIUM Mustang to get into the game.

Two quick field goals by Rafidzul Affendi Mustapa and Helmi Sazrim Tamami in the 58th and 59th minutes respectively sealed the game as River Blue Kuala Selangor celebrated.

River Blue Kuala Selangor's Azrul Amri Ahsan was picked as the Best Player while his teammate Mohd Aizat was chosen Best Goalkeeper.

As the champions, River Blue Kuala Selangor received RM1,000 while IIUM Mustang pocketed RM750.

River Blue Kuala Selangor team manager

Mohd Jazuli Zainuddin was elated with their players' courageous performance.

"The players struck form at the right time. Qualifying for the semi-finals was an achievement. But the players overcame the odds and defeated the experienced Senil Solutions in the semi-finals to qualify for the final.

"We were rated as the underdogs against IIUM Mustang. But the players' determination and fighting spirit played a big part in the win," said Mohd Jazuli.

IIUM Mustang coach Mohd Zahani Mohd Isa felt their players lost concentration during the closing stages of the match.

"We have to give credit to River Blue Kuala Selangor for their never-say-die attitude which led them to the convincing win. We congratulate them for the victory," said Mohd Zahani.

Senil Solutions finished third after a 3-1 win over Goodwood Hockey Club and received RM500.

Selangor Hockey Association (SHA) deputy president Datuk S. Sivasundram, who gave away the prizes to the winning teams, congratulated River Blue Kuala Selangor for winning the crown.

"It is good to see a group of youngsters from Kuala Selangor winning the title. We would like to encourage teams from other districts to be active in hockey," said Sivasundram.



Players from River Blue Kuala Selangor celebrate after Mohd Faiz Mohd Nooh scored the equaliser



A player from IIUM Mustang (left) in a tussle for the ball with a player from River Blue Kuala Selangor. — Photos: IBRAHIM MOHTAR/The Star

TNB-QNET Selangor Hockey League

- Division Three
- Roll of Honour
- Champions: River Blue Kuala Selangor
- Runners-up: IIUM Mustang
- Third: Senil Solutions
- Fourth: Goodwood Hockey Club
- Best Player: Azrul Amri Ahsan (River Blue Kuala Selangor)
- Best Goalkeeper: Mohd Aizat Ali (River Blue Kuala Selangor)

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Players and officials from River Blue Kuala Selangor celebrate with their prizes



The umpire had to stop players from both IIUM Mustang (in yellow) and River Blue Kuala Selangor from being involved in a brawl.