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Tiny but `mighty`

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Nurinsafi may be a small team but they have big heart for the game

By S. SAKTESH

PETALING JAYA: It's not easy to stay competitive in the Malaysian Hockey League (MHL) when your team are small compared to some of the giants competing.

For Nurinsafi, it's all about playing to their strength in a field filled with tougher opponents.

Although Nurinsafi won 3-2 in their recent game against UiTM at the Bertam Hockey Stadium in Penang on Thursday, team owner and manager S. Thaitchana Muruthi said the score could have gone either way.

It was only the team's second win in the league so far after six matches, having lost the four other fixtures.

"We won our second game, but it was anyone's match against UiTM. It was all about who was going to take the chances and convert them," he said.

Thaitchana added that team head coach Prem Kumar usually has to rely on two key players in the squad, which is sharpshooter Nur Rahull Hrsikesa Thaitchana Muruthi and goalkeeper Che Shahrul Azmi Che Saupi.

"With them we have an advantage, especially when they are in form. But when they are not around or not feeling good, it's tough for the team," he said.

Thaitchana added that the team lack players of high quality who can go toe-to-toe with top players from bigger clubs such as Tenaga Nasional, Terengganu and Maybank.

"This is the situation faced by small teams in the league. Most of our import players are juniors, but to perform in the MHL you need top level players," he said.

Being based in Penang, Thaitchana also said players are reluctant to move up north to be with the team during the league window, as they would have to give up their personal commitments.

"Players don't want to move their families to Penang while they train with the

MALAYSIAN HOCKEY LEAGUE FIXTURES

■ TODAY

MATADOR vs TNB THUNDERBOLTS - 4pm
 (National Hockey Stadium 2, Bukit Jalil)

TENAGA NASIONAL vs UiTM - 6pm
 (National Hockey Stadium 2, Bukit Jalil)



Eyes on the ball: Nurinsafi's Nur Rahull Hrsikesa Thaitchana Muruthi (right) in action against UiTM during their match.
Below: Nurinsafi goalkeeper Che Shahrul Azmi Che Saupi. — MHC



team, they are worried that their jobs and livelihood will be affected if they have to take an extended leave for training and competing.

"Players much rather play for the clubs who are based in Kuala Lumpur or bigger clubs like Terengganu," he said.

Nurinsafi will have some time before their next game, which will be a tough task as they play Tenaga Nasional on Feb 4 in Bertam.