

Headline	Sapura hire foreign trio to boost title ambitions in MHL		
MediaTitle	The Star		
Date	26 Jul 2016	Language	English
Circulation	338,368	Readership	1,032,000
Section	Sports	Page No	46
ArticleSize	130 cm ²	Journalist	S. Ramaguru
PR Value	RM 9,324		



Sapura hire foreign trio to boost title ambitions in MHL

By S. RAMAGURU

KUALA LUMPUR: Former champions Sapura are hungry for success and want to win at least one title in this season's Malaysia Hockey League (MHL).

To realise their dreams, the Premier Division side have hired three highly-capable players. Veteran Kiwi forward Phillip Burrows will lead the attack with Australian Oscar William Wookey. In midfield, Sapura have talented Indian Gurbaj Singh.

They also have seven Malaysian internationals – Mohamed Firhan Azhaari, Mohamed Izad Hakimi Jamaluddin, Joel van Huizen, Faiz Helmi Jali, Mohamed Marhan Jalil, goalkeeper Mohamed Hairi Abdul Rahman and Norsyafiq Sumantri – in their 20-man squad.

"We have gone too long without any titles. We have a better team this time to mount a strong challenge," said team manager Louis Gregory.

"We finished third in the league and third overall last year. This season, our plan is to finish in the top two and snatch at least one of the three titles at stake," added Louis.

Sapura first shot to prominence in 2004 when they won the league title. Their most successful campaign was in 2005 when they emerged as double champions. Sapura's last title – the overall crown – came in 2006.

"I believe we are competitive enough to challenge the big two – Terengganu and KLHC (Kuala Lumpur Hockey Club) – for honours. It's up to the players now to show what they're capable of," said Louis.

Sapura, however, will not have the services of two of the country's top coaches – Tai Beng Hai and Stephen van Huizen – to helm the team. All coaches attached to the Malaysia Hockey Confederation (MHC) are banned from coaching MHL teams this season.

Veteran coach Yahya Atan has been given the task of bringing back the glory days.

"It's a big blow not to have Beng Hai and Stephen as coaches but we believe that Yahya can do a good job," said Louis.

Besides Sapura, Terengganu and KLHC, the other teams in the Premier Division are Universiti Kuala Lumpur (UniKL), Maybank and Tenaga Nasional. The league will begin on Aug 18.