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Fitri's clarion call

Terengganu skipper wants team to win at least one title

By K.M. BOOPATHY

PETALING JAYA: A gutted Terengganu skipper Fitri Saari is not ready to conclude the Malaysian Hockey League (MHL) season without a title and has urged his side to fight back in the last remaining silverware – the TNB Cup – after the league title slipped away on Sunday.

Terengganu needed a win against Nurinsafi and had taken a 4-2 lead before the northern side scored two late goals to snatch a dramatic 4-4 draw in Bertam, Penang.

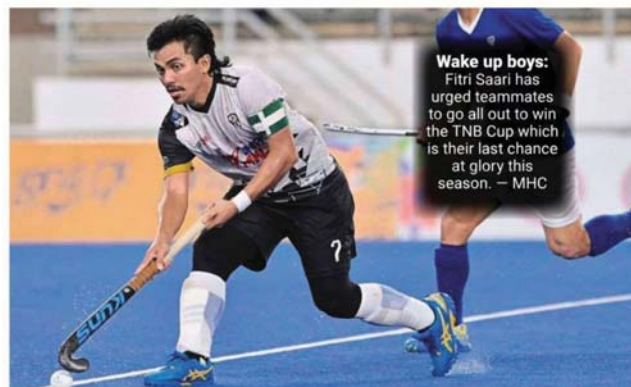
Treble champions last year, Terengganu have already surrendered the Charity Shield to Tenaga Nasional after losing 1-3 in the shoot-out (both teams were tied 2-2 in regulation time) at the National Hockey Stadium in Bukit Jalil on Feb 7.

Terengganu needed to beat Nurinsafi and Maybank in their last match at the National Hockey Stadium today to retain their league title.

However, the stumble against Nurinsafi has given Tenaga a clear path as they just need to beat bottom of the table Jm Antbees, who have lost all their nine matches so far, in Bukit Jalil to clinch the league title for the first time since 2003.

Terengganu have only missed out on a title in their debut year in 2013 where Kuala Lumpur Hockey Club (KLHC) were the kingpins and were denied by the treble-winning UniKL in 2020.

"We missed a lot of chances and our defence was not disciplined enough to hold Nurinsafi. It was very frustrating but we cannot give up at this stage and must



Wake up boys: Fitri Saari has urged teammates to go all out to win the TNB Cup which is their last chance at glory this season. — MHC

bounce back against Maybank and at least finish second in the league," said Fitri.

"Having lost two titles, Terengganu must fight back as we have a strong tradition in MHL.

"We will start from the scratch in the TNB Cup and go all out grab the one final opportunity to win a title this year."

Nurinsafi will be patting their backs for a well played season after registering seven wins, a draw and two defeats to finish fourth in the league.

Meanwhile, Tenaga coach Norsauful Zaini said the team would be focused on their game against Antbees to confirm

their second title today.

"Terengganu's draw means a slight relief for us as we just have to beat Antbees and confirm the league title. We are not going to change anything and play with the same momentum," said Norsauful.

Maybank only need a draw to finish second while Terengganu must win to finish behind champions elect Tenaga.

Meanwhile a minor battle to confirm the eighth spot in the league and secure a TNB Cup berth will take place between KL City and Young Elephants also in Bukit Jalil today.

Said KL City coach I. Viknesvaran:

TNB MHL		MALAYSIAN HOCKEY LEAGUE RESULT						
NURINSAFI	4	TERENGGANU						4
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	
T. NASIONAL	9	7	2	0	70	9	23	
MAYBANK	9	7	2	0	48	6	23	
TERENGGANU	9	7	2	0	39	14	23	
NURINSAFI	10	7	1	2	40	26	22	
THUNDERBOLTS	10	5	0	5	28	27	15	
UITM	9	5	0	4	25	25	15	
LIAONING	9	3	0	6	23	31	9	
KL CITY	9	2	1	6	18	45	7	
YELEPHANTS	9	2	0	7	14	40	6	
ARM. FORCES	10	2	0	8	17	52	6	
JM ANTBEES	9	0	0	9	16	63	0	

TODAY'S FIXTURES	
UITM vs LIAONING (4pm)	(National Hockey Stadium, Pitch 1)
YOUNG ELEPHANTS vs KL CITY (4pm)	(National Hockey Stadium, Pitch 2)
TENAGA NASIONAL vs JM ANTBEES (6pm)	(National Hockey Stadium, Pitch 1)
TERENGGANU vs MAYBANK (6pm)	(National Hockey Stadium, Pitch 2)

"Almost the entire team are playing in the MHL for the first time. Some of them even worked as ball pickers in last year's MHL and that will give you a hint how far they have come in the last 12 months."

"Young Elephants are part of the Pahang's project squad and have been together for about 10 years and if we can get a good result against them, it will be a bonus.

"We have earned our objective of gaining exposure and get quality matches and it will help our cause in the Sukma in Sarawak this year."

Tenaga, Maybank, Terengganu, Nurinsafi, UITM, Thunderbolts and China outfit Liaoning are the teams who have confirmed their TNB Cup spots from the league.