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No easy start for Harte

By R.KIRUBASHINI

KUALA LUMPUR: Ireland's international David Harte entered the fray in the Malaysian Hockey League facing high expectations – but he failed to live up to the hype in his first outing.

The lanky UniKL goalkeeper conceded two goals against minnows TNB Thunderbolt at the National Hockey Stadium in Bukit Jalil. Although they won 4-2, they struggled for much of the match against the youngsters.

Much had been expected of Harte who captained Ireland in both the 2016 Olympics and the 2018 World Cup but the 31-year-old brushed off the below-par performance.

"We could have won with a bigger scoreline as we dominated the match," he said.

"Thunderbolt took the opportunities they had due to our own mistakes.

"Of course, you never want to concede as a goalkeeper but the most important thing was the win," said Harte, who only arrived in Malaysia on Tuesday as he had to

be with his wife who is due to give birth soon.

The good news for UniKL is that forward Tengku Ahmad Tajuddin Tengku Abdul Jalil, who underwent a jaw surgery on Thursday, was at the stadium to support his teammates.

He had been ruled out for the rest of the league but could yet make a return if he recovers sooner than expected.

UniKL and Tenaga are both tied with 12 points but Tenaga top the standings with better goal difference.

Thunderbolt surprised the fancied UniKL side by taking the lead in the fourth minute off a field goal by Nasrul Syahkhir Sadikul.

Hardly a minute later, Mohd Razie Abdul Rahim equalised off a penalty corner drag flick. UniKL kept up the pressure and added another two goals to take a comfortable lead.

Izwan Firdaus Ahmad Tajuddin scored from close range in the 14th minute before Mohamad Faid Farhadh made it 3-1 in the 25th minute.



Under threat: UniKL's Roel Bovendeert tries to flick the ball past TNB Thunderbolt goalkeeper Che Shahrul Azmi. — SHAARI CHEMAT/The Star

But Thunderbolt still managed to reduce the deficit in the 46th minute off a penalty corner goal by Mohd Fahmi Khalid.

In the 49th minute, Australian Timothy Deavin scored from an acute angle to make it 4-2 and regain the two-goal lead.

UniKL coach Arul Selvaraj said

the team were caught off guard when Thunderbolt scored the first goal.

"We are unhappy with the mistakes we made and for failing to capitalise on the chances we had," he said. "Anyway, we secured the three points and are on the right track to win the league," he added.

VALUATOR

Company(Brand)	Mention	Tone	ROI
Industry News for Nestle - Sports (Industry News for Nestle - Olympics (Olympics)	2	0	0
Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB) (Hockey TNB Thunderbolts)	1	0	0
Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB) (Tenaga Nasional)	3	0	0
Universiti Kuala Lumpur (UniKL) (Universiti Kuala Lumpur	2	0	0
	7	0	0