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Powerless Tenaga has Saiful shocked

By AFTAR SINGH

KUALA LUMPUR: Tenaga Nasional may have the services of 13 national players but they have hardly showed any sign of that pedigree in the Malaysia Hockey League (MHL) so far. And coach Nor Saiful Zaini is not at all pleased.

The seasoned campaigners, who have been a staple feature in the MHL since 1987, have been a letdown in the first three matches, although they won all three.

Tenaga opened their campaign by beating TNB Thunderbolt 3-1 and then outplayed minnows Kedah-Nurinsafi 6-1 before struggling to beat Maybank 2-0 on Wednesday.

The Tenaga players have been together for a few years now, both in the club and at national level, but are still fumbling with basics like stopping the ball and making simple passes.

Their defence, led by two national players Faiz Helmi Jali and Syed Mohd Syafiq Syed Cholan was shaky while the midfield led by Mohd Amirol Aideed Mohd Arshad, Shello Silverius and Norsyafiq Sumantri seemed lost.

The strikeforce comprising four national players in Mohd Akhimullah Anuar Esook, Mohd Noor Firdaus Rosdi, Mohd Shahril Saabah and Mohd Azrai Aizad Abu Kamal were also firing blanks against Maybank.

Nor Saiful Zaini was really annoyed with his team's performances.

Looking lost: TNB's Syarman Mat Tee (left) and Mohd Amirol Aideed Mohd Arshad trying to stop Maybank's Amirrullah Zainul during their Malaysia Hockey League match on Wednesday. — MUHAMAD SHAHRIL ROSLI/The Star

"We won our first three matches but our performances were nowhere near our best. We have many national players but they failed to play to true form. They are playing as though this is the off-season," said the former international.

"They can't even stop the ball and they make basic errors. My players are also not fit enough for the league.

"I am having a headache watching them play in the league. I only had less than two weeks to prepare the team.

"My main focus now is how to motivate the players to play to their true form. I also need to work on their fitness," said Nor Saiful.

Tenaga's next match will be against Hockey Academy (Hockademy) of Kuala Lumpur today at the National Hockey Stadium in Bukit Jalil and Nor Saiful is hoping his players can play rise to the occasion and play like champions.

Tenaga will wrap up the first round matches against reigning overall TNB Cup champions Terengganu on Jan 22 and league champions Universiti Kuala Lumpur (UniKL) on Jan 29.