KLHC just pull through

MHL: Fighting Sapura give champions a scare

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KUALA Lumpur Hockey Club (KLHC) did just enough to beat Sapura 3-2 in the Premier Division of the Malaysia Hockey League at the National Hockey Stadium yesterday.

The double champions started their second round campaign the same way they ended the first round — beating Sapura with the same score of last week in Kuantan.

At the adjacent pitch, UniKL fell 4-1 to Terengganu, having defeated them 3-1 last weekend.

Sapura took the lead in the ninth minute through Dangerous Lee but KLHC equalised four minutes before halftime when Akhtar Ali got it right.

However, Sapura were back in front in the 40th minute when Khasif Ali converted a penalty corner, taking his tally to nine goals in the MHL.

The lead, however, lasted only eight minutes as KLHC's Muhammad Imran made it 2-2 before stepping up to score from another penalty corner in the 52nd minute to give KLHC full points.

As for UniKL, they paid the price for sloppy defending in the 20th minute when Tengku Ahmad Tajuddin's hard work and deft pass allowed Alif Nazaruddin to tap in from close range.

Four minutes later, Sufi Ismat made it 2-0 after he was left alone on the far post to score.

Fitri Saari then scored a beauty in the 41st minute for a comfortable 3-0 lead before S. Selvaraj pulled a goal back for UniKL in the 53rd minute. Fitri Saari made the final score 4-1 with a 70th minute penalty corner conversion.

"We gave them too much respect and paid the price for it. We let in soft goals and failed to make use of the chances that we created. It was a poor display by our standards and it was a disappointing outing," said UniKL coach Arul Selvaraj.

"It was a lucky escape for us and credit to Sapura who played really well. We were a bit soft in defence and need to do better. But I admire the fighting qualities displayed by my players as they never gave up," said KLHC manager George Koshy.

RESULTS — Premier Division: KLHC 3 Sapura 2, UniKL 1 Terengganu 4, Nur Insafi 0 Tenaga 1.

Today — Premier Division: Maybank v Tenaga Nasional (National Stadium II, 6pm).

Division One: Sunday 2030 v TNB Thunderbolts (National Stadium I, 6pm), UniTen v Bukit Jalil SS (National Stadium II, 8pm), SSTMI v UiTm (Taman Daya, 6pm).