High octane up north

KLHC can wrap up title with victories over Maybank and Nur Insafi

BY S. RAMAGURU

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysia Hockey League (MHL) title could be decided this weekend as the Premier Division teams head north for a carnival outing.

KL Hockey Club (KLHC) have already secured a four-point lead at the top and if they win both their matches in Penang, then they will have an unassailable lead and will retain the league title with two matches in hand.

They play bottom side Nur Insafi on Friday followed by second-placed Maybank on Sunday. The match with the Tigers will be the title clincher if KLHC sidestep Nur Insafi.

But KLHC are not going to count their chickens before they are hatched.

Team manager George Koshy has warned that the Tigers are unlikely to let them win without a fight.

"I do not think it will be easy. Although mathematically we can win the title in Penang by winning both the two matches, it is easier said than done," he stressed.

Last weekend, KLHC beat Sapura 3-2 and Terengganu 4-1 to edge closer to the title.

Koshy attributed the team's eight unbeaten run to the addition of six foreign players.

There are five Pakistanis – Mohamed Imran, Akhtar Ali, Umar Butt, Waseem Ahmad and Fareed Ahmad. The other is Timothy Deavin of Australia.

"They all managed to gel quickly with the other players and it contributed to our excellent all round game. And we are also scoring freely and not depending on just a few players," he said.

KLHC have 11 different names on the score sheet. Their main goal getters are Akhtar (eight), Mohamed Imran (seven) Umar (five) and Chua Boon Huat (five).

Koshy said Maybank also have foreign players with equal calibre.

"Overall, the other teams are also well balanced and Maybank have good foreign players. We cannot even take Nur Insafi for granted. We will take one game at a time and then move on. It is better that way," added Koshy.

Maybank coach Wallace Tan also advocated taking one match at a time.

"We just cannot afford to waste time thinking about the other matches. We need points to stay ahead of the next team and also stay in the title mix.

"It was a good outing for us last weekend as we managed to collect full points. So we are looking forward to the upcoming ties. We hope to be ready for both matches," said Wallace.

Maybank, who have four Pakistanis in their side, play fourth-placed UniKL on Friday before the KLHC match. Their remaining matches the following weekend are against Terengganu and Sapura.

Tenaga Nasional are third in the seven-team league, seven points behind KLHC, and they can only get into the title mix if the top two teams falter. Otherwise, it will be a two-horse race.
PREMIER DIVISION

(All matches at USM Hockey Stadium, Penang)

FRIDAY
SAPURA vs TENAGA NASIONAL - 4pm
UNIKL vs MAYBANK - 6pm
NUR INSASI vs KLHC - 8pm

SATURDAY
SAPURA vs TERENGGANU - 6pm

SUNDAY
MAYBANK vs KLHC - 4pm
UNIKL vs TENAGA NASIONAL - 6pm
TERENGGANU vs NUR INSASI - 8pm

STANDINGS

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DIVISION ONE

FRIDAY
UITM vs MBI - 6pm
UNITEN vs TNB THUNDERBOLT - 8pm
(Pitch II, National Hockey Stadium, Bukit Jalil)
BJSS vs SSTMI - 6pm
(Education Ministry Turf, Jalan Pantai)

SATURDAY
SUNDAY 2030 vs Uitm - 6pm
(Pitch II, National Hockey Stadium, Bukit Jalil)

SUNDAY
UNITEN vs SUNDAY 2030 - 6pm
TNB THUNDERBOLT vs SSTMI - 8pm
(Pitch II, National Hockey Stadium, Bukit Jalil)
MBI vs BJSS - 6pm
(Sultan Azlan Shah Stadium, Ipoh)

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