KUALA LUMPUR: With only five matches left in the Malaysia Hockey League (MHL), the fight for the top scorer award has turned into a tight race.

Sapura’s Pakistani ace Khasif Ali and Mohamed Noor Faeez Ibrahim of Universiti Kuala Lumpur (UniKL) lead the charge with 13 goals.

One goal behind them are Kuala Lumpur Hockey Club’s Akhtar Ali and Tenaga Nasional’s Faizal Saari, the winner of the award the last two seasons. And hot on their heels is Pakistan’s top penalty corner flicker Mohamed Imran, who plays for KLHC.

The winner of the award stands to gain RM2,000 and Faizal is gunning for a hat-trick. But he needs to start scoring again as his scoring prowess has tapered off after a good start.

Kashif, playing in his fourth season in the MHL, has shown he can be a deadly flicker after taking over as Sapura’s main flicker. Before joining Sapura, he was with Nur Insafi for three seasons.

“I have been able to score more goals this season as I’m now the main flicker. It is good to see competition as it will help me do better. But for now our focus is on making sure the team win all the matches,” said Kashif.

Mohamed Noor is the skipper of the Project 2013 team the last two years. He was also the leading scorer in the Sultan of Johor Cup in 2011 and skippered the team to the title. Last year, he was also skipper of the team who won the Junior Asia Cup. He has had a slow start to the season but has regained his confidence.

Said UniKL coach A. Aruselvaraj: “Mohamed Noor is playing better and on target with his flicks. We are banking on him to get us past Sapura in the quarter-finals,” he said.

With Kashif and Noor Faeez going head-to-head in the last eight, one of the players will drop out of the race. That means that players whose team make the semi-final stage stand a better chance of winning the award.
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— SAPURA’S KASHIF ALI

The leading scorers

13: Kashif Ali (Sapura), Mohamed Noor Faeez (UniKL).
12: Azkhtar Ali (KLHC), Faizal Saari (Tenaga Nasional).
10: Mohamed Imran (KLHC),
8: Mohamed Umar Bhuttta (KLHC),
7: Shakeel Abassi (Maybank), Mohamed Irfan (Maybank), Mohamed Waqas (Maybank), Tengku Ahmad Tajuddin (Terengganu).

Mad rush for goals

TOMORROW

*All matches at the National Hockey Stadium, Bukit Jalil

FIRST LEG

PREMIER DIVISION (PITCH II)

SAPURA vs UNIKL - 6pm
TENAGA NASIONAL vs TERENGGANU - 8pm

DIVISION ONE (PITCH I)

SUNDAY 2030 vs SSTMI - 6pm
UNITEN-KPT vs MBI - 8pm

FRIDAY

SECOND LEG (PITCH I)

PREMIER DIVISION

TERENGGANU vs TENAGA NASIONAL - 6pm
UNIKL vs SAPURA - 8pm

DIVISION ONE (PITCH II)

MBI vs UNITEN-KPT - 6pm
SSTMI vs SUNDAY 2030 - 8pm

Stiff fight: Mohamed Noor Faez Ibrahim (left) of Universiti Kuala Lumpur is the joint top scorer with Kashif Ali of Sapura with 13 goals each. Below: Faizal Saari, on 12 goals, is eager to win the award for the third year in a row.