Staying on the edge

Sapura and Tenaga hold advantage after narrow first-leg wins

By AFTAR SINGH

KUALA LUMPUR: The two TNB Cup quarter-final matches are finely poised after yesterday's first-leg ties at the National Hockey Stadium in Bukit Jalil.

Sapura and Tenaga Nasional hold the advantage, having edged Universiti Kuala Lumpur (UniKL) and Terengganu 3-2 respectively.

Sapura can thank their Pakistani imports – Muhammad Zubair and Khasif Ali – for the slim win.

First, it was Muhammad Zubair who put them ahead off their first penalty corner in the fourth minute.

UniKL should have equalised in the 26th minute but were denied a clear penalty stroke by umpire P. Puvalagan in when a penalty corner drag flick by Mohd Noor Faeez Ibrahim hit the foot of defender Megat Azrafiq Megat Termizi in front of the goalmouth.

The umpire blew for another penalty corner, which Noor Faeez failed to convert.

Sapura, who finished fourth in the Premier Division, doubled the score in the 34th minute when Khasif sent a low flick past UniKL goalkeeper Shahru! Azaddin Auskarzie.

Khasif then scored his second – and the team's third – goal in the 59th minute off yet another penalty corner.

Just when Sapura thought it was game over, Noor Faeez struck again five minutes from time from another penalty corner.

Sapura coach Tai Beng Hai was unhappy with his team for not finishing off UniKL. "UniKL played well and took their chances but we'll be better prepared in the return leg," said Beng Hai.

UniKL coach S. Arulselvaraj too was annoyed with his team for not putting their chances away.

"But it was a goodfight back and the players believed in themselves to keep this tie alive," said Arul.

"There's still everything to play for on Friday ... we intend to tighten up our defence."

In the other quarter-final, Mohd Amerullah Abdul Aziz scored from close range to give debutants Terengganu a shock lead in the 24th minute.

But Tenaga, who won the TNB Cup in 2009, levelled the score 10 minutes later through forward Faizal Saari's penalty-corner flick.

Tenaga came back after the breather refreshed and began to pile on the pressure on Terengganu.

Their move paid off when Mohd Azammi Adabi scored from close range in the 47th minute. Faizal was on target again to score his second in the 60th minute to take his tally to 14 goals.

But hardly a minute later, Tengku Ahmad Tajuddin narrowed the score with a field goal.

UniKL coach S. Arulselvaraj too was annoyed with his team for not putting their chances away.

"But it was a goodfight back and the players believed in themselves to keep this tie alive," said Arul.

"There's still everything to play for on Friday ... we intend to tighten up our defence."

In the other quarter-final, Mohd Amerullah Abdul Aziz scored from close range to give debutants Terengganu a shock lead in the 24th minute.

But Tenaga, who won the TNB Cup in 2009, levelled the score 10 minutes later through forward Faizal Saari's penalty-corner flick.

Tenaga came back after the breather refreshed and began to pile on the pressure on Terengganu.

Their move paid off when Mohd Azammi Adabi scored from close range in the 47th minute. Faizal was on target again to score his second in the 60th minute to take his tally to 14 goals.

But hardly a minute later, Tengku Ahmad Tajuddin narrowed the score with a field goal.
On the losing side: UniKL’s Meor Mohd Azuan Hassan in action against Sapura yesterday. – S.S. KANESAN / The Star

PREMIER DIVISION
SAPURA 3 UNIKL 2
TENAGA 3 TERENGGANU 2

DIVISION ONE
SUNDAY 2030 5 SSTMI 2
UNITEN-KPT 2 MBI 3

TOMORROW
RETURN LEG FIXTURES

PREMIER DIVISION
TERENGGANU vs TENAGA NASIONAL - 6pm
UNIKL vs SAPURA - 8pm
(Both matches at Pitch 2, National Hockey Stadium, Bukit Jalil)

DIVISION ONE
MBI vs UNITEN-KPT - 6pm
SSTMI vs SUNDAY 2030 - 8pm
(Both matches at Pitch 1, National Hockey Stadium, Bukit Jalil)