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HOCKEY

# Kelantan living their dream

**AMAZING:** Team in final despite not having a proper pitch to train on

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**K**ELANTAN does not even have a playable artificial pitch, but their juniors made it to the Division Two final of the NSC-Milo-MHC Junior Hockey League through sheer grit and determination.

Unbeaten after nine matches, coach Hamzi Shaari's charges will also play in the two-leg Milo Cup quarter-finals starting on Feb 22.

And their other reward is promotion to play with the big boys in Division One next season.

"Our only artificial pitch is in bad

shape as the turf has fallen apart in many areas and is dangerous to train on, but we have no choice but to train there anyway.

"We also had to share it with the football team, but it was worth the hassle, as my players showed true grit to reach the final," said Hamzi, who teaches at SM Tanah Merah.

However, a moment of madness saw Kelantan's key midfielder Ashraf Noor being flashed the red card, and now his team are set to suffer the consequences in the final today, as well as the first leg of the quarter-finals.

"Ashraf was instrumental in attack as well as defence and without



him, we will be the underdogs against KLSS (Kuala Lumpur Sports School) as well as in the quarter-finals of the Milo Cup."

In the Milo Cup, the four seeded teams are Tengku Mahkota Ismail Sports School, Petaling Jaya City Council, UniKL and Andersons.

Tengku Mahkota Ismail Sports School Juniors, Malacca High School, KLSS and Kelantan will draw lots tomorrow to determine their opponents in the last eight.

Kelantan, who last won the Division Two title in 2008, will have to overcome a strong KLSS hurdle, as the city side not only have a battery of good coaches, but also many world class artificial pitches around them to train.

"This is the first time that we are playing in the final after making our debut three years ago, so we will be out to claim our first JHL

silverware," warned KLSS team manager Zainal Ariffin Abdullah.

His confidence stems from the fact that while Kelantan have lost their playmaker, KLSS can bank on their top scorer Noor Faiz Rosli, who has scored 11 goals in nine matches.

"Kelantan have proven that they are fighters as they came back from two goals down to beat Politeknik (4-3) in sudden death so we will have to be extra careful, but I believe my players can overcome the odds," said Zainal.

**Today — Division Two Final:** Kelantan v KLSS (7pm); **Third-Fourth:** Anderson Juniors v Politeknik PKT (5pm) — *Matches at Pitch II, National Hockey Stadium.*