

Headline	It's face-off time again		
MediaTitle	The Star		
Date	26 Feb 2013	Color	Full Color
Section	Sports	Circulation	304,904
Page No	50	Readership	1,026,812
Language	English	ArticleSize	339 cm ²
Journalist	S. Ramaguru	AdValue	MYR 15,787
Frequency	Daily	PR Value	MYR 47,361



It's face-off time again

Thunderbolt and UniKL favourites for overall crown battle

By S. RAMAGURU

KUALA LUMPUR: Showdown No. 4 is on the cards as SSTMI-Thunderbolt and Universiti Kuala Lumpur (UniKL) are fancied to face off again in this Sunday's MHC-Milo-NSC Junior Hockey League final.

The two teams have contested the last three finals for the overall title, with UniKL triumphant in 2010 and Thunderbolt in 2011 and 2012.

Both teams will start as favourites in the semi-finals, which will be held tomorrow and on Friday.

In tomorrow's first-leg, Thunderbolt will meet MBI-Anderson in Johor Baru while UniKL will play against SSTMI Juniors in Kuala Lumpur.

Thunderbolt, however, will be wary of the threat posed by MBI-Anderson, who are the only team to have beaten them in the preliminary round.

"When we faced MBI-Anderson in the preliminary round, we had to travel up north and that took a toll on my players. We are again facing a travel headache ... when you consider that teams have to play three matches in six days (including the quarter-final return leg on Sunday), that can be taxing indeed," said Thunderbolt coach Wan Mohamed Roslan.

That's why Thunderbolt will need a big win to take back to Ipoh for the second leg.

MBI-Anderson, on the other hand, will do all they can to try and hold the sports school to a



Full of caution: UniKL coach K. Embaraj will not take SSTMI Juniors lightly in the first leg of the semi-finals tomorrow.

draw or even snatch a narrow win and, hopefully, complete the job on home ground.

MBI-Anderson coach Mohd Ezral Ariff warned his players not to be too confident "although we beat Thunderbolt in the preliminary round".

"The semi-final is always a different ball game. This is the knockout stage and we need to plan over two matches," he said.

"We need to go to Johor Baru and grind out a result which we can use to our advantage in Ipoh. They can be beaten ... we did it earlier, so we can do it again."

In the other tie, UniKL will definitely be the team to watch out for especially after their 13-0 aggregate win over Malacca High School in the quarter-finals.

SSTMI juniors, meanwhile, endured a tough time before edging Division One runners-up Petaling Jaya City Council (MBPJ) 8-7 in the last eight.

But SSTMI Juniors can expect an even tougher time from UniKL, whose coach K. Embaraj wants them to win the overall title.

"We won't take any team lightly ... SSTMI Juniors deserve our respect for having come so far. They would have learnt their lessons from the narrow win in the last eight and I'm sure they'll try to secure a good result in KL and then finish us off at home on Friday," said Embaraj.

"I'll field my best team as we are injury-free. We want to go for a big win and make our work a little easier in the return leg."