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## HOCKEY

# Underdogs all set to bite

### TNB CUP: Sapura coach Beng Hai looking to Khasif to upset the formbook

**FADHLI ISHAK**

**W**ITH nothing to lose but much to gain, Sapura coach Tai Beng Hai is banking on Pakistani import Khasif Ali to secure an upset victory in their TNB Cup semi-final against league champions Kuala Lumpur Hockey Club (KLHC).

Beng Hai, whose charges secured a 6-4 aggregate win over UniKL in the quarter-finals, said he was happy to enter the match as underdogs but admitted that getting the better of the three-time double champions would be an uphill task.

The first leg will be held on Friday at the National Hockey Stadium in Bukit Jalil.

"We have made our target of reaching the semi-finals. Whatever we manage after this is a bonus for us," said the former national coach.

"Obviously they (KLHC) are the favourites. They have become even stronger this season and have not lost a match to date.

"There is no pressure on us to win. I am hoping the boys play to their full potential during the game."

Beng Hai, whose charges lost 3-2 in both the first and second round league matches to KLHC last month, added that converting as many penalty corners as possible will be key if they are to spoil the party for the champions.

That responsibility will fall on the shoulders of Khasif, who currently leads the scoring charts with 17 goals in both league and cup competitions. Khasif was signed from Nur Insafi earlier this year.

"KLHC have very few weaknesses so we really need to take our chances well, especially on the penalty corners.

"Khasif has been an excellent signing for us as we did not have a top-class flicker in the team before him.

"A number of people have said that Khasif has been lucky to score so many goals but I disagree.

"The truth is he has great skill, vision and anticipation which have allowed him to get all those goals."

The other semi-final will see Tenaga Nasional play Maybank. Tenaga had beaten Terengganu 8-3 on aggregate in the quarter-finals.

**Friday — TNB Cup semi-finals, first leg:** Tenaga Nasional v Maybank (6pm); Sapura v KLHC (8pm). *Matches at Pitch II, National Hockey Stadium.*

**Presidents Cup semi-finals, first leg:** TNB Thunderbolts v MBI (6pm); UiTM v Sunday2030 (8pm). *Matches at Pitch I, National Hockey Stadium.*



Sapura's Mohd Faizal Daud (centre) attempts to get past two UniKL players in the quarter-final, second leg of the TNB Cup on Friday. Sapura won 3-2 and 6-4 on aggregate.