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A big threat to Tenaga

Kumar: Pakistani players are livewire of KLHC

Reports by S. RAMAGURU

KUALA LUMPUR: Tenaga Nasional goalkeeper S. Kumar believes that the Pakistani connection in the KLHC side will be their biggest threat in the final for the Premier Division overall title at the National Hockey Stadium in Bukit Jalil today.

And the national No. 1 goalkeeper reckons that stopping them will go a long ways towards winning the match.

KLHC and Tenaga Nasional are meeting in the overall final for the third in a row, with KLHC having been the more dominant team in recent years. Both teams also go into the final having won 12 titles each since the MHL's inception in 1987.

For Kumar, the records are just statistics and "I'd rather worry about this one final for now".

"Just like KLHC, we too want to win the final and regain the overall title. It'll be tough and both teams have enough top level material to get the job done," he said.

"How we perform on match day will be the key. Like I said, their Pakistani players are the livewire of the team."

This is the first time that KLHC will be fielding foreigners in their team.

Akhtar Ali is their top goal poacher with 14 goals. He is closely followed by compatriot Mohamed Imran (12) and Mohamed Umar Bhutta (9). The fourth Pakistani, Waseem Ahmad, has scored just once but he is more adept at setting up goals.

They have another Pakistani in Fareed Ahmad and Australian midfielder Timothy Deavin.

"I don't know what strategy the coaches will come up with but we need to give some special attention to these foreign players. The final can be a touch-and-go affair and any mistakes made will be punished. I'm going to do my best to stop

them but it has to be a team effort," said Kumar.

But it's not like Tenaga do have aces up their sleeves either. They have an all-local outfit, with Faizal Saari the key player.

His ability to score field and penalty corner goals makes him their stand-out player. His 17 goals have put him in a good position to win the top scorer's award as well.

But there are many others who just as prolific that it's not easy to pick a match winner in the Tenaga side.

One thing Tenaga need to do is get their team

playing as a cohesive unit. If they can do that, then they'll be quite a handful.

After a slow start to the season, Tenaga have picked up steam in the knockout stage.

"Yes, we have been playing better in the knockout stage. If we can keep it up and score, then there is a good chance for us to win the title," said Kumar, who took some time out yesterday to help train some young goalkeepers under the MHC-UniKL goalkeepers' development programme.

But make no mistake, he is focused on the final today and nothing will stand in his way as he seeks to regain the overall title.

I don't know what strategy the coaches will come up with but we need to give some special attention to these foreign players.

— S. KUMAR

MHL 2013		
THIRD PLACE PLAY-OFF		
PREMIER DIVISION		
MAYBANK	1	SAPURA 2
DIVISION ONE		
MBI	1	SUNDAY 2030 3
TODAY FIXTURES		
FINAL		
PREMIER DIVISION		
KLHC vs TENAGA NASIONAL - 8.00pm		
DIVISION ONE		
UITM vs TNB-THUNDERBOLT - 6.00pm		
(Both matches at Pitch II, National Hockey Stadium, Bukit Jalil)		