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A league with no quality

MHC need to do more to make MJHL more relevant

By S. RAMAGURU

KUALA LUMPUR: The MHC-MILO-NSC Junior Hockey League (MJHL) is dying a slow death.

A record 27 teams may have signed for the 2013 season. But, in terms of quality, only two teams lived up to expectations. They, however, could only do so much to keep the tournament afloat.

SSTMI-Thunderbolt won their second double in as many years with Universiti Kuala Lumpur (UniKL) their biggest rivals.

Nothing, however, has changed in the last three years, Petaling Jaya City Council (MBPJ) made an attempt to try and win one of the titles this time but fell flat on their face in the end.

Now, how do one go about getting quality out of these teams and making the MJHL relevant again?

It's all about money and the teams getting sponsorships to help them out financially.

Thunderbolt went that way and it turned them into a championship outfit.

They started playing in 2000 under the Bandar Penawar Sports School (BPSS) banner. And they were nowhere near the all-conquering Bukit Jalil Sports School who bagged 13 titles in a span of nine years.

Then in 2010, BPSS combined with Tenaga Nasional and took on the Thunderbolt name. They never looked

back since then, winning the league title in 2010 and 2012 and three overall titles from 2011 to 2013.

Thunderbolt coach Wan Mohamed Roslan said a sponsor was the best thing to happen to them as it gave them the financial clout to keep their best players after their schooling days.

"Now, we also act as a feeder to the Tenaga Nasional team in the Malaysia Hockey League (MHL). We made the right move to have a sponsor. It would have been difficult for us to keep our star players after they completed their education. Now, we can have them until pre-university days. This is what teams need to do to get the quality that they desire. I have no doubt about it."

UniKL coach K. Embaraj agreed that the MJHL is fast becoming a two-horse race and lacking in quality.

"It is clear in the last few years we are seeing the league being dominated by a few teams. Three in the early 2000, now by two teams. This is not good as we are not having the quality that is required to keep it relevant," said Embaraj.

The two coaches urged MHL teams to adopt the MJHL teams and help them develop over the years.

"It will be a win-win situation. The junior teams will get the funding required to keep their development

going and keep their good players. At the same time, the juniors will progress and eventually continue playing in the senior league. And there is also a good chance that they get top-notch coaching as well," said Embaraj.

Besides the poor quality of the games, the standard of umpiring also came under fire.

MBPJ made a protest after the second leg quarter-final defeat to SSTMI Juniors and claimed that the umpiring was way below par.

Said MBPJ assistant team manager Zainal Abidin Ismail: "The technical committee need to look into the standard and rectify the problem. Efforts must be made to educate and help develop our umpires. So, I hope the Malaysian Hockey Confederation (MHC) will act and treat the issue seriously."

The scheduling of the matches was also done haphazardly with teams not being informed of the changes. And, sometimes, the fixtures were changed at the last minute.

For the MHC, they need to put their ear to the ground and listen to the teams' grouches.

Things should be done properly if they want the teams to put up a better show in future. Otherwise, the MJHL, is sure heading for a doom.