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KLHC sizzle, TNB struggle

DEFENDING champions KL Hockey Club (KLHC) got off to a great start in the Malaysian Hockey League while Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB) needed a late goal to salvage a draw in yesterday's Premier Division matches in Bukit Jalil.

KLHC, led by six foreign players, outplayed Universiti Kuala Lumpur (UniKL) 5-0 at National Hockey Stadium.

Pakistan international Akhtar Ali scored two quick goals in the third and fourth minutes before Razie Rahim extended KLHC's lead with a penalty corner conversion in the 20th minute.

Chua Boon Huat (37th) and Harvinder Singh (61st) completed the rout.

Despite taking a 2-0 lead after 25 minutes, TNB, last season's league runners-up, were held 4-4 by newcomers Terengganu in an earlier match.

TNB coach Nor Azlan Bakar said a

point from the match was better than not earning anything.

"I am not too worried as this is only our first match. As we are still trying out combinations, I tested all the players today (yesterday). We need to improve defensively and minimise mistakes," said Nor Azlan at National Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Terengganu coach Nik Rozemi Nik Mohamed, delighted with the draw, said: "I am using this tournament, mainly to prepare the juniors for next year's Malaysia Games.

"Apart from the eight seniors, the others are being groomed for the Malaysia Games. A point from this match is a good result as TNB are an established side. I packed my midfield after halftime and it made the difference," said Nik Rozemi.

Terengganu's Mohd Shahrin Nabil deflected the ball past his own goalkeeper Khairulnizam Ibrahim

to give TNB the lead after 13 minutes before national striker Faizal Saari added a second in the 23rd minute.

Terengganu, however, reduced the deficit in the 30th minute through Sufi Ismat Rahul Amin before taking a 3-2 lead with goals from Tengku Ahmad Tajuddin Tengku Jalil (40th) and Fitri Saari (41st).

TNB drew level through Faizal's penalty corner trademark flick but Sobirin Ilias regained Terengganu's lead in the 64th minute.

Muhammad Ramadhan Rosli salvaged a point for TNB when he rifled home from close range four minutes from time.

RESULTS — Premier Division: Tenaga Nasional Berhad 4 Terengganu 4, Nur Insafi Warriors 1 Sapura 1, KLHC 5 UniKL 0.

Division One: S5TMI 0 TNB Thunderbolts 6, Ipoh-MBI 2 UiTM 4, Sunday 2030 KL 1 Uniten 3.

FIXTURES — Today: Premier Division: Maybank v Terengganu (National Hockey Stadium, Pitch II; 6pm). **By Ajitpal Singh**