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Selvaraj hoping for an early Christmas

FOR UniKL, the fixtures this weekend are akin to a visit to hall. For they will take on two of the top rated teams in the Malaysian Hockey League at the National Stadium in Bukit Jalil.

On Friday they take on Tenaga Nasional Berhad and on Sunday they will cross swords with table toppers Maybank. And if they can walk away with two points, coach Arul Selvaraj could be forgiven if he thought that Christmas came early this time around.

UniKL have three points after two matches, a 5-0 defeat at the hands of defending champions KL Hockey Club last Friday was followed with a 2-1 win in their travel up north against Nur Insafi Warriors.

"It cannot get any tougher than this and I am keeping my fingers crossed we come out of this avoiding heavy defeats. If we can get a point off each team, it will be a bonus," said Arul.

"TNB and Maybank are a class above us and we have to be realistic. TNB are virtually the national side while Maybank have a solid midfield with Shakeel Abbasi and Shafqat Rasool pulling the strings.

"Hence, not only are they favourites to walk away with three points, but I am sure they will be looking to score goals as well."

But Arul added that the UniKL players had the ability to take the shine off their opponents.

"The players need to start believing in their abilities. I have a bunch of youngsters, whose skills are second to none but they lack confidence as well as big match temperament," said Arul.

"This is where the exposure they receive in big matches like these will help them become more accomplished players. All they need to do is be confident. Respect your opponents but do not fear them."

UniKL have several talented youngsters and experienced players like skipper Baljit Singh and S. Selvaraju to guide the team. Against KLHC, they were a nervous bunch, conceding two goals in the opening five minutes.

"I cannot fault them as so far as commitment is concerned. Trust me that they are getting better as the days go by. And I hope they can raise their game to match TNB and Maybank," said Arul.