

Hockey: A harder job for Rajan at ATM

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K. RAJAN holds a rare distinction of being one of the few who have tasted victory, both as player and coach in the Malaysian Hockey League (MHL). The former national junior coach won the MHL and overall titles in 1987 as a player with Tenaga Nasional (TNB) before becoming the club's coach four years later.

And Rajan turned out to be an exceptional coach as he guided TNB to four league titles (1991/92, 2000/2001, 2002, 2003) before leaving the club in 2008.

He was engaged by the Malaysian Hockey Federation (MHF) to coach the national junior team, who did well in last year's Junior World Cup in Johor Baru before accepting a two-year offer from the Armed Forces.

Rajan, after a two-year hiatus, has returned to the MHL with newly-promoted side ATM-Airod. Unlike Rajan's previous stint with TNB, where his job was made easier as they had all the top players, he faces a more difficult task with ATM, who are represented by a bunch of unknowns.

In their opening match on Dec 18, ATM managed to hold Sapura to a 1-1 draw in the first half but eventually lost 7-2.

"My boys played well against Sapura but could not handle their nerves in the last 15 minutes of the match, which resulted in a hammering. I kind of expected it to happen as it was their first ever match in the top flight," said Rajan yesterday.

ATM gained promotion to the Premier Division after finishing second to UiTM in last year's Division One season.

"However, my boys have learnt a lot from that defeat. They have realised that one need to be focused throughout 70 minutes to gain good results in the Premier Division."

Rajan said his side are much more confident with their play after the two-week break.

"I used the two weeks to teach my players tactics and they have adapted with the minor changes. I believe they will produce a better game in their following matches," he added.

ATM will resume their campaign against Nur Insafi on Friday before facing Rajan's former side TNB two days later. Both matches are at the Tun Razak Stadium.