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## League leaders won't take position for granted

By S. RAMAGURU

KUALA LUMPUR: The KL Hockey Club are not taking the lead in the Premier Division for granted and will redouble their efforts to stay ahead of the chasing pack in the Malaysia Hockey League.

KLHC, the reigning league champions, lead the nine-team standings with 12 points after five matches and are ahead of Universiti Kuala Lumpur (UniKL) on goal difference.

Today, they will get a chance to consolidate their position when they take on winless UiTM.

And tomorrow they face off with UniKL in a clash that could very well decide the title race.

KLHC coach K. Dharmaraj admitted yesterday that the title race was far from over.

"I do not see any one or two teams dominating the title race. The lead at the top of the standings can change again. That is why we are not worried about the top spot just yet," he said.

"Right now we need to win to stay ahead. There are four or five teams who can lay claim to the title at this time. So, the main thing is to take it one match at a time and try to secure full points."

KLHC got off to a bad start this season, losing 0-2 to Tenaga Nasional on Dec 17.

But they have since chalked up four wins on a trot to take top spot – defeating Sapura 7-2, Yayasan Negeri Sembilan 7-3, Armed Forces-Airod 3-0 and Nur Insafi 7-2.

They have scored 25 goals thus far and let in only seven. They have the best attacking record and their ability to score both field and penalty corner goals have been a revelation.

"I think it is good that we are able to score both types of goals. In the past, we had trouble converting the field chances," said Dharmaraj.

"So that is a plus point for us this season. We need to keep it up and be consistent in our performance.

"But we are not going to get carried away with our form and we will work hard to maintain it as we head into the second half of the season."

UniKL will be hoping for a win over Maybank today for a much-needed confidence boost ahead of their clash against KLHC tomorrow.

The Tigers have not been performing well so far but they do have the ability to play well.

UniKL have won all their matches by one-goal margins and their main weapon is their ability to score penalty corner goals through New Zealand import Richard Patherick.

Thus, the Tigers will have to be careful in their defence.

Other contenders like Tenaga Nasional have a tricky tie as well. The defending overall champions face Nur Insafi and they also need to win to stay in the race for the league title. They have dropped points in the 1-1 draw with Maybank and the 1-2 defeat by UniKL.

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