Dazzling debut by hot prospect

SMK Mutiara Impian striker Jafri wows spectators with sensational hat trick against Sabah school

PENANG: It was a “baptism of fire” for promising young striker Muhammad Jafri Chew as SMK Mutiara Impian made a fiery start in their FAM-MOE Under-17 football challenge in Bagan Serai here. A new kid on the block, Muhammad Jafri who was sent into the fray despite being barely 15, blasted home a sensational hat trick to make a dream debut in the Under-17 Age Group category.

His feat before the Mutiara Impian home fans was not only inspiring, it was enough to give the Penang Sports School a dream start in their campaign as they opened their new League season with a thumping 6-0 win at the SMK Mutiara Impian Mini Stadium last Saturday.

With Mutiara Impian seemingly on fire and determined to make up for last year's debacle of being shown a shocking exit in the semi-finals of the challenge, they firmly vented their frustrations on SMK Datuk Peter Mojuntin. And the mauling was enough to send the Sabahans home, along with their Under-14 side which suffered an identical bashing in their opener played at the same venue just earlier.

As if Mutiara Impian were so determined to make up to their home fans for that disappointment of having fumbled against SMK Syed Hassan of Perlis at the same ground last year, they simply swung into action from the word 'go'.

It took them just two minutes to successfully prise open the Peter Mojuntin goal — enough to leave the visiting Sabahans stunned. The Peter Mojuntin outfit were still struggling to settle down when Jafri blasted home a thundering right footer to give Mutiara Impian the dream start they were looking for.

The Sabahans were still searching themselves for answers when Jafri delivered the second blow just eight minutes later to put Mutiara Impian into a commanding 2-0 lead. This time, the goal-hungry lad let fly a stinger from the top of the box and Peter Mojuntin goalkeeper Andrean Jipmon was left in despair as the ball sailed past him to dance the net.

A seemingly rattled Peter Mojuntin side however managed to finally settle down and when they did, they so bravely warded off the highly offensive approach Mutiara Impian had to offer afterwards to keep the score decent. However, Mutiara Impian were not to be denied a third goal before the teams headed back for the dressing room.

That third blow Mutiara Impian delivered came in injury time of the first half challenge with Muhammad Junaidi coolly chipping his shot over an on-rushing Adrean, to spark off yet another celebration in the stands.

Even with the comfortable three-goal lead, the Penang out-
fit were far from satisfied.

With two-goal hero Jafri eager to get his scoring act together again after the breather, in his bid to confirm himself a sensational hat-trick as his personal opening prize, it spelt trouble for the visitors. Just as he had inspired Mutiara Impian with his striking prowess in the first half, Jafri confidently completed that task just two minutes into the second half.

This time it was Junaidi, whose long through pass from midfield saw Jafri sprinting down 30m to meet the ball. The moment he swung in a well-placed shot to the far left of the goal, substitute goalkeeper Mohd Sakri Masri, who was sent into the fray at the start of the second half, was made to experience an identical nightmare Adrean was put through at the start of the game.

The highly inspired Mutiara Impian side went on to add two more goals to their tally, with Muhammad Rizuan Abdul Rahman claiming the fifth in the 71st minute and Muhammad Fitri Che Hassan rounding up their day with the sixth just two minutes later to celebrate his return to his home state after a stint with Kedah's SMK Tunku Anum in style.

Coach Noraeffendi Taib was more than satisfied with their overall performance, though disappointed that they had squandered no less than five sitters on the day.

"Of course I can have no complaint if the impressive score line is to be used as a yardstick," said Noraeffendi, with a wide smile.

"But there is surely still much to be done if the number of sitters we squandered is to be taken into account," he said.

Noraeffendi, however, was especially pleased with the way his new recruits in the likes of Tunku Hidayat Tunku Ishak from SMK Guar Perahu fitted into the team. Proving to be a pillar of strength at the heart of the Mutiara Impian defence, he successfully helped stabilise their defence, which was feared to have been considerably weakened following the departure of former skipper Muhamad Syafiq Shafaruddin, who is now donning USM FC colours in the Premier League this season.

Noraeffendi was also filled with praise for his two Under-15 lads in Jafri and Muhammad Shakir Aiman, whom he felt played above expectations despite being up against more experienced and older players in the Under-17 age group category.

Meanwhile, in an earlier Under-14 challenge, a hat trick from 13-year-old Mohamed Azreen Haika Roslan steered Mutiara Impian to an identical win for an equally inspiring start.

Their other goals came from Mohamad Faisal Abdul Halim, Mohamad Aminur Azmi and Nazmi Najim Md Hadzir, who claimed a goal a piece to complete the rout.

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Aerial thrill: Rizuan still in firm control of the situation despite being airborne to cut short an SMK Datuk Peter Mojuntin raid.
Hero of the day: Jafri (left) on the way to blasting home his second goal during the FAM-MOE Under-17 League opener at the SMK Mutia Impian Mini Stadium. Mutia Impian beat SMK Datuk Peter Mojuntin 6-0.