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Joy at last for Waterboys

Club record their first ever victory in Premier League challenge

By RONNIE OH

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CONTRASTING fortunes rocked Penang as the second round Premier League challenge kicked off at various venues in the country.

On a night when the Penang Water Authority Football Club (PBAPP FC) clinched their first ever Premier League win since gaining promotion to the league's second tier at the end of last year, the on-song Penang Panthers suffered a huge setback in their campaign.

Such was the predicament of the Penang fans, who opted to put their celebrations on hold after obtaining news that the Panthers had suffered a shock 3-2 defeat to Johor DT II at the Municipal Council Stadium in Pasir Gudang on Friday.

However, for the Waterboys, as club side PBAPP FC are so fondly known, both players and team officials alike for the first time this season wore smiles when they beat Sabah 1-0 at the Likas Stadium in Kota Kinabalu.

Coach Yunus Alif, who took time off from his hospital bed after being warded for diarrhoea the night before, heaved a sigh of relief when the final whistle went off.

It was the presence of imports comprising Ugandan Kaye Edrisar, Australian midfielder Alexander Thomas and Russian defender Aleksandrovich Boris who ensured victory for the team.

"We finally carved out an outright win and there was never a doubt that it was the players desire's to win that made it happened.

"Although we only scored a goal, it was my players who made it count at the end of the day.

"Although we lost focus and allowed Sabah to come at us particularly in the second half, the presence of the imports helped

the local players to keep their cool and absorb the pressure as Sabah came searching for the equaliser.

"Now, with the 'winless' pressure off our chest, we should be seeing some good results with the foreign players," said Yunus.

PBAPP FC, which were forced to leave another Ugandan import Ochaya Silvah Luis out of their plans when his international transfer certificate failed to arrive in time, however, still managed to deliver that all-important goal through striker Mohamed Faiz Nasir in the 18th minute.

There was, however, no joy for the Panthers at the Municipal Council Stadium in Pasir Gudang, Johor, when they lost 3-2 to Johor DT II, a side they convincingly beat 4-1 at the City Stadium in Penang last week.

Both team appeared to be heading back to the dressing room with a blank scoresheet when Johor DT II surprised Penang.

Against the run of play, Penang got hit when Spanish striker Braulio Norbrech Rodriguez exploited a defensive lapse to bury the ball home.

Penang, who were denied the lead by the woodwork in the first half, tried to make amends when they returned after the breather, only to slip further when one of their defenders handled the ball inside the box and a penalty was awarded.

They were left trailing 2-0 after Singapore skipper Shahril Ishak took the shot and scored in the 53rd minute.

Penang reacted positively to the setback when they pulled one back instantly from the restart, with Angolan striker Buengo Andre Titi blasting home in a goalmouth melee to make it

2-1 in the 54th minute.

And when Johor conceded a free kick, South Korean ace Lee Gil Hoon stepped up to deliver yet another fantastic shot to make it 2-2 in the 67th minute.

However, just when Penang looked set to pick up a precious point from this away assignment, Rodriguez struck again two minutes into time added on.

This time, he outpaced South Korean defender Lee Kwang Hyeon to place the ball beyond goalkeeper Khairul Amri.

Penang were unlucky to be denied a share of the spoils when Muhammad Rafiuddin's thundering right footer was again stopped by the crossbar.

Though disappointed, Penang team manager Mohamed Azizudin Mohamed Shariff was full of praise for his gallant players.

"We played well but lady luck was not with us. Full credit goes to my players for their fantastic fighting spirit.

"But with our rivals like Felda United fast catching up, we must not falter any further beginning with Monday's (today) clash against Sabah," added Mohamed Azizudin.

RESULTS: PBAPP FC 1 Sabah 0; Felda United FC 3 DRB Hicom FC 2; Negri Sembilan 2 Perlis 0; Kedah 1 Selangor UiTM FC 1; KL SPA Putrajaya FC 0 Police 3; Johor DT II 3 Penang 2.

FIXTURES TODAY: PBAPP FC vs Felda United FC (City Stadium, 8.45pm); Police vs Johor DT II (Municipal Stadium, Petaling Jaya, Kelana Jaya, 4.45pm); Selangor UiTM FC vs KL SPA Putrajaya FC (UiTM Stadium, Shah Alam, 4.45pm); Perlis vs Kedah (Darulaman Stadium, 4.45pm); DRB Hicom FC vs Negri Sembilan (Hang Jebat Stadium, 4.45pm); Sabah vs Penang (Likas Stadium, Kota Kinabalu, 8.15pm).

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Gutsy effort: PBAPP FC's Russian import Aleksandrovic (in red) challenging Sabah's Dendy Loa for the ball.