

# USM going great guns

## Club turn professional in this season's second tier league

**Dateline: Penang**

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**U**NIVERSITI Sains Malaysia (USM) Penang showed that their exposure in the Malaysian Premier (football) League did not go to waste as they powered their way to the inter-varsity football crown last Saturday.

The USM staff team, better known as USM FC, are playing in their inaugural professional campaign at the FA of Malaysia (FAM) second tier League this season.

They defeated Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) 2-0 in the varsity final at the USM stadium.

The university was also crowned as the overall joint title holders of the 35th Inter-Varsity Games (SUKUM).

The football team's gold medal, one of seven hauled in the Games, enabled USM to be on equal terms with their Universiti Perlis counterpart UniMAP.

For the USM football squad, it was a day of pride before their partisan home fans who had turned up in record numbers to lend support even though their hockey team was also involved in a final match in an adjacent stadium at almost the same time.

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Despite having a new manager

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and coach, the USM footballers were fired-up.

Abdul Wahab Yaakob replaced Mohd Azizuddin Shariff as manager while coach S. Veloo made way for ex-state footballer Manzoor Azwira Wahid with both filling-in just for the duration of the Games.

After a morale boosting 2-0 win over University Teknologi MARA (UiTM) in the quarter-finals and a 2-1 semi-final victory over



**Keen tussle:** Baser (right) fights for the ball with University Putra Malaysia's Mohd Hafeez Khairi (in red) during their SUKUM-35 final match at USM.

Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS), USM trooped onto the pitch with confidence.

The host team displayed class after its ace striker Muhammad Fauzan Zainal Abidin drew first blood in the 28th minute.

Freed by his strike partner Mohd Baser Napea, Mohd Fauzan latched onto a defence splitting pass and his rising shot from the top of the box firmly sailed into goal.

A shell-shocked UPM side were struggling to come to terms with the setback when USM delivered the second blow just 10 minutes later with Mohd Redzuan Nawi nodding home a corner.

That was enough to snuff out whatever fire that UPM had in the final.



**Intense:** A University Putra Malaysia player (in red) tussles with two USM players.