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On the run: UPM (in white) in possession of the ball in the recent friendly match against Unisel (in orange).

Starting it off on a right note

UPM confident of its position in the coming TM University League

By **NG WEI LOON**
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UNIVERSITI Putra Malaysia (UPM) is ready to face the challenges in the TM University League and emerge as the top university football team in the country.

Last season, UPM won both the Premier League and Champion Cup titles. UPM coach Saheh Said said they were determined to start the season on a winning note.

UPM will take on Universiti Malaya (UM) in the Charity Shield match at the Universiti Kebang-

saan Malaysia (UKM) Stadium on March 15.

UPM started their preparations in January. Saheh and his assistant Zainal Abidin Yusof conducted a trial and about 50 players attended the trials.

The final squad of 25, including 13 from last season, have been registered for the new season.

In the squad are seven players who are involved in the M-League. They are the Selangor defensive trio of Mohd Fadzirul Zakaria, Abdul Ghani Abdul Rahman and Mohd Zaiza Zainal Abidin and the

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View from the bench: (From left) Saheh, Zainal and Rozaini watching the UPM players in action.

All ready for an exciting outing

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PKNS duo are Razlan Joffri Ali (defender) and Mohizam Shah Dawood Shah (striker) while Farouk Hashim and Hasmarul Fadhil are donning the Felda United and KL Plus stripes respectively.

Saheh said they had a strong defensive line-up but had to make strategy adjustments when the players were with their respective teams in the M-League.

Last season, UPM lifted the league title after a narrow 1-0 win over UiTM in the final league fixture. In the Champion Cup final, UPM humbled UiTM 5-2 on penalties after both teams were tied on 1-1.

UPM captain Muhammad Sofizal Soknini was also voted as the man of the match.

In 2006, UPM won the Champion Cup. In 2005, UPM were the University League Division Two runners-up and went on to finish second in the Division One in the following year.

Saheh considered UiTM as their strongest opponent and was wary of the threat.

"UiTM also have several players playing for teams in M-League reserve league," said Saheh.

Muhammad Sofizal, who has been playing for UPM for the past four years, said it would be his last season.

"This is my final season playing for the UPM side because I will be graduating. It will be great to equal last year's accomplishments winning the League and FA Cup," said Sofizal, who is a human development student.

UPM played a friendly match against Universiti Industri Selangor (Unisel) but lost 1-2. However Saheh was not too concerned as the match served as an opportunity to gauge the players' progress.

A total of eight teams - UPM, UiTM, Universiti Malaya, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Kolej Universiti Infrastruktur Kuala Lumpur and Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia - are taking part in the Premier division of the Malaysian Universities Sports Council (MASUM) University League from March to August.



Swansong: UPM captain Sofizal (in white) will be aiming to win both titles with the side in his last season.