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**Shielding:** UPM captain Muhammad Sofizal (centre) keeping possession of the ball while the UM players (in blue) close in on him.

# UM kicks off to a roaring start

Team upstages defending champs to bag Charity Shield Cup

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Photos by **RICKY LAI**

**N**EWLY-PROMOTED side Universiti Malaya (UM) made a strong impression in the curtain raiser of the Malaysian Universities Sports Council (MUSC) Uni-League football competition.

They kicked off the new season on a high note and upstaged the Premier League and FA Cup defending champions Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) to bag the Charity Shield Cup at the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) Stadium last Saturday.

Following a goalless draw in regulatory time, UM edged UPM 4-2 in the penalty shootout to claim the first silverware of the season.

UM earned their berth to feature in this season's Premier League when they lifted the Division One title last year.

And they came out charging in the first half to make their presence felt with their speedy display on the pitch.

UM coach Johari Jamaluddin said it was their strategy to dictate the pace early in the match.

"Honestly, it was an even competition. But, we were fortunate to walk away with the win. Coming into the match, we were aiming to create an upset. From here, we are determined to do well in the league and FA Cup competitions," he added.

Considering the UPM goalkeeper Muhammad Reduan Mohamed had a testing time and was kept busy protecting his goalmouth, UM

grew in confidence and continued to pile up the pressure in attack.

Despite Reduan fumbling on several crucial occasions, UPM were let off the hook with UM failing to make the opportunities count.

"In the first half, we created several good chances. But, we did not capitalise on the shots at goal," said Johari, adding that their captain Mohd Mazimi Mohamad was an inspiration to the team with his hardworking rate on the pitch.

UM leftback Mazimi also gave credit to their goalkeeper Mohd Asrulhisham A Wahab for his sterling performance.

"It was a very close contest. Knowing that he (Asrulhisham) was in control guiding our goal, it gave us the assurance to put up a strong challenge and push forward. He also helped us to read and shut down the opponents' moves," added Mazimi.

UPM coach Saheh Said said they made three of their four substitutions to strengthen their defensive line.

Even with the support from PKNS duo of rightback Razlan Joffri Ali and striker Mohizam Shah Dawood Shah featuring in the M-League, UPM failed to penetrate and make a breakthrough to score.

"We were forced to make the changes and repositioned our players because we were weak in defence. That affected the consistency of our deliveries in the match. We definitely missed the services of three defenders - Mohd

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**Good start:** UM winning the curtain raiser Charity Shield Cup encounter to lift the first silverware of the season in the MASUM Uni-League football competition.



**One-on-one tussle:** UM captain Mohd Mazimi (left) stretching out to prevent UPM Mohd Nor Ilman Mahad from winning the ball.

## Norazmi's final kick saves the day

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Fadzirul Zakaria, Abdul Ghani Abdul Rahman and Mohd Zaiza Zainal Abidin - who are playing for Selangor in the M-League side to beef up our side," Saheh added.

In the penalty shootout, UPM kept their hopes alive after a bad start with Felda United Farouk Hashim missing the opening shot.

They stayed in contention when Latif Rahim Tiong squandered UM's third attempt.

However, UPM did not recover when Mohd Azzarudin Hafiz Mohd Azani failed to convert the fourth spotkick.

It was a forgone conclusion when Norazmi Ramliy netted the final and fifth kick and gave UM

the reason to jump for joy.

Three other penalty scorers for UM were Abdul Aziz Abd Rahman (first), Jinel Noin (second) and Saiful Izwan Mohammed Alli (fourth).

UPM scored through Fandi Jafri (second) and Mohizam (third).

In the Premier League, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) and Kolej Universiti Infrastruktur Kuala Lumpur (KLIUC) also got off to a winning start in their opening matches.

UTM defeated Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) 4-2 and KLIUC edged Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia (UIAM) 2-0.

Meanwhile, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI) and Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) settled for a 2-2 draw.