



Siti Noor Amarina (left) and Fazilla Sylvester Silin will play for Castelldefels HC.

Nothing comes easy

WARNING: Malaysia must not relax despite weak opposition

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THE Malaysian women start as raging favourites to win gold in the first round of the World League which begins in Kuantan today.

This is because the hosts will battle relatively easy teams in the shape of Singapore, Kazakhstan and Sri Lanka over the next three days for a ticket to the tougher Second Round.

The newly formed World League will see teams from around the globe playing over four rounds for Olympic tickets.

"It may look easy but be rest assured we are taking nothing for granted. Every match is like a final and each goal counts so there is no room for mistakes or complacency," said Malaysian women's coach Nasihin Nubli.

"I will field my best team for every match as this tournament does not provide an avenue for exposure as a place in the second round is at stake. And the format, a one-round league, does not allow us the luxury of a second take."

Malaysia, who open against Singapore, had their first feel of the blue turf upon their arrival in Kuantan on Tuesday. And after three training sessions, Nasihin feels his players have got used to the change of colour, both in terms of the pitch and ball.

"It was initially a strange feeling and it took the players some time to get used to it. But the pitch conditions are superb," added Nasihin.

With sweeper Sebah Kari having retired

from international duty, Nasihin said changes will be made to their defence with skipper Nadia Rahman expected to play the sweeper's role.

"It is Kazakhstan who worry me more as not much is known about them. The last time we saw them in action was in the 2010 Asian Games where we won 4-2. But looking at their team list, they have retained many from the Asian Games," said Nasihin.

The tournament will also be special for two Malaysian players who will be heading for the Spanish League next month.

Siti Noor Amarina and Fazilla Sylvester Silin, both 25, have signed up to play for Castelldefels HC.

"I am looking forward to Spain as I hope to gain experience and help Malaysia do well internationally," said Amarina, who made her national team debut at the Asia Cup in New Delhi in 2004.

Amarina, who is from Penang, is currently pursuing a degree in Physical Education at Universiti Putra Malaysia. She has 93 caps and lists the win over South Africa in the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne as her best moment in hockey.

As for Fazilla, a striker, scoring goals for Malaysia in Kuantan is the task she intends to accomplish to ensure a top finish for her team.

"Though I am expected to score goals, it is a team effort and the end result is what matters," said Fazilla who is from Mukah, Sarawak.

Fazilla, with 62 caps, made her debut in the 2007 Sea Games in Korat where she scored her first international goal.

TODAY: Sri Lanka v Kazakhstan (4pm), Malaysia v Singapore (6pm).

Tomorrow: Singapore v Sri Lanka (4pm), Kazakhstan v Malaysia (6pm).

Sunday: Singapore v Kazakhstan (4pm), Malaysia v Sri Lanka (6pm).