



National Sports Council director-general **Datuk Ahmad Shapawi Ismail** (back left) with the **Serdang Angels** players who won the Super League at the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia campus in Bangi yesterday. Pic by Nur Adibah Ahmad Izam

Angels finally soar

PERENNIAL underachievers Serdang Angels finally lived up to their potential after clinching their maiden Super League title with a 16-13 win over defending champions Keris Conlay in the final at the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia campus in Bangi yesterday.

Both teams were tied 13-13 with five minutes on the clock, but Angels' Muhammad Faizal Md Tahir kept his calm to split the sticks with a penalty in the 77th and emerge the hero for the Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) team.

Faizal had earlier scored penalties in the sixth and 69th minutes and had also converted a Faat Hor Rozi Ismail try in the 36th minute. Faizal's performance earned him the Man of the Match award.

Conlay got on the scoresheet through two Fairuz Ab Rahman penalties in the 19th and 60th minutes as well as a try from Fijian Jone Marawa Nasalo (36th), which Fairuz also converted.

It was a dream finish for Angels who were suspended by the Malaysian Rugby Union earlier this season for competing abroad without sanctioning from the national body.

Angels head coach Khairizal Ali Amat

praised his charges for a disciplined performance.

"Our plan was to utilise our forwards as best as possible and that winning penalty was due to their play," said Khairizal.

"It is definitely a very happy moment for us as we were supposed to play Conlay in our first match during the group stages (Conlay were given a walkover) but were suspended.

"But we got to play and beat them today and for it to give us our first every super league title really means a lot to everyone in the team."

They took home RM10,000 prize money, the highest ever offered in the tournament, for their victory.

Angels, who lost in the semi-finals last season, have often been criticised for having never won the tournament despite the bulk of the national team being on their books every year as UPM are the rugby centre of excellence for Malaysian universities.

They had never reached the Super League final before.

Tunku Mahkota Ismail Sports School, who lost to Angels in the semi-finals, finished third after beating Negri Sembilan Wanderers 42-31 in the playoff. **By Fadhli Ishak**