

Good target practice

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Malaysia warm up for Super Four round with big win over Oman

By S. RAMAGURU

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia warmed up for the Super Four round of the Asia Cup hockey tournament with another big win.

Yesterday, Stephen van Huizen's team wrapped up their Group B fixtures unbeaten by whipping Oman 7-1 at the Maulana Bhashani National Hockey Stadium in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Earlier, Malaysia opened their campaign with a 7-1 demolition of China. They then followed it up with a 2-1 win over South Korea.

Malaysia rested veteran goalkeeper S. Kumar and midfielder Fitri Saari yesterday, but still proved too good for Oman as they scored four field goals and three penalty corner set pieces.

But surprisingly, Malaysia failed to get going in the first quarter. They only came alive in the second quarter, which saw six goals being scored.

Faizal Saari started the ball rolling by scoring Malaysia's first penalty corner in the 16th minute. It opened the floodgates as Tengku Ahmad Tajuddin was on target in the 18th minute. Two minutes later Mohamed Shahril Saabah made it 3-0.

Tengku Ahmad was on target again in the 23rd minute.

RESULTS & STANDINGS ASIA CUP HOCKEY TOURNAMENT

> GROUP B

MALAYSIA	7	OMAN	1
SOUTH KOREA	7	CHINA	2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
MALAYSIA	3	3	0	0	16	3	9
S. KOREA	3	2	0	1	15	6	6
CHINA	3	1	0	2	5	15	3
OMAN	3	0	0	3	4	16	0

SUPER FOUR FIXTURES

(All matches in Malaysian time)

> TOMORROW

MALAYSIA vs PAKISTAN	5pm
INDIA vs SOUTH KOREA	7.30pm

> THURSDAY

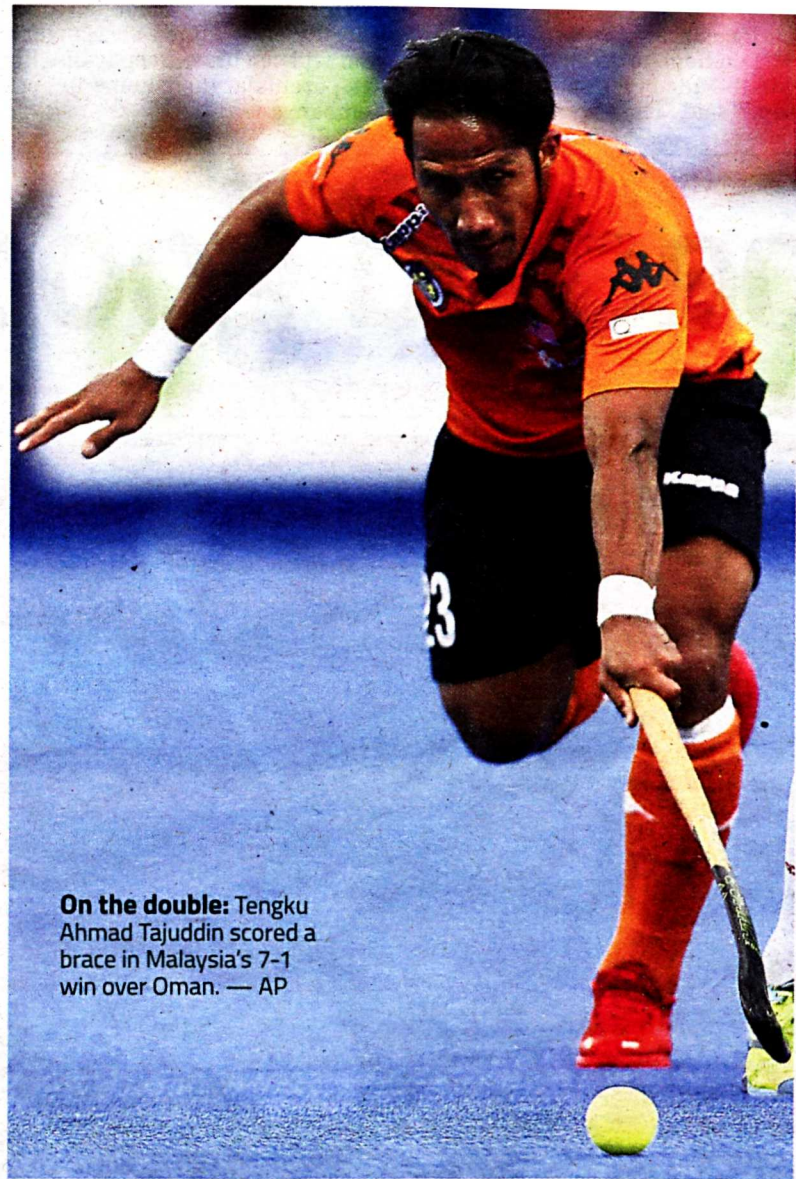
SOUTH KOREA vs PAKISTAN	5pm
MALAYSIA vs INDIA	7.30pm

> SATURDAY

MALAYSIA vs SOUTH KOREA	5pm
INDIA vs PAKISTAN	7.30pm

But Salmeeen Al Nofali managed to reduce the deficit for Oman in the 25th minute off a penalty corner.

Faizal, however, made it 5-1 in the 27th minute for his sixth goal to emerge as the tournament's leading scorer.



On the double: Tengku Ahmad Tajuddin scored a brace in Malaysia's 7-1 win over Oman. — AP

In the third quarter, Mohamed Amirol Aideed netted his first goal of the tournament through a deflection in the 40th minute. Mohamed Najmi Jazlan also scored for the first time with a reverse hit in the 42nd minute for a comfortable win.

National team manager Mohamed Nasihin Nubli blamed the scoreless first quarter to the players' lackadaisical attitude.

"We were just too casual. Our players showed more urgency in the second quarter to get the goals.

"Overall, we are happy with the showing as all the players were able to put in some quality work,"

said Nasihin.

"For us, the real tournament starts on Wednesday with the Super Four. Winning all the group matches has boosted our players' confidence," he added.

Besides Malaysia, the other teams who qualified for the Super Four are India, Pakistan and South Korea. First up for Malaysia is Pakistan tomorrow followed by India on Thursday and South Korea on Saturday.

The top two teams after the Super Four will square off in Sunday's final while the bottom two will fight for the bronze medal.