

Malaysia shine against world's best

KUALA LUMPUR — Second place in an international competition may be good for most people but Malaysia women's indoor hockey coach K. Gobinathan wants more.

In their first tournament, the Malaysians defied odds to finish second after losing 2-0 to Kazakhstan in the final.

They had three wins, one draw and a loss.

However, Gobinathan wants more games to analyse his players while leaving the door open for others to join.

"The other countries sent their best teams as the tournament doubled as a World Cup qualifier," said Gobinathan.

"I was happy with our women's performances as they fought back in many of the games to win.

"We can do even better so I'd like to keep my options open."

Malaysia's players were mainly from the development squad.

Gobinathan applied tactics such as taking off the goalkeeper in the game against Thailand in the final minutes to chase the winning goals after going down a goal.

They eventually got two and held on for the win.

Separately, Siti Noor Hafiza Zainordin, better known as "Fifty", emerged as best goalkeeper.

"It was the Thailand game where we clawed our way back from a goal down to lead after the coach took me out and added another outfielder," said the 27-year-old.

"I came in and in the last five minutes managed to hold out their countless attacks which eventually put us in the final.

"It's great for the team as we showed plenty of fighting spirit," added the University Putra Malaysia undergraduate.

It's uncharted territory for the Malaysians as they chase World Cup qualification in the outdoor format while the prospect for growth and expansion on the indoor version is possible.

Siti Noor Hafiza and company have received a huge boost and are fairly confident of winning the SEA Games gold medal.