

VARSITY GAMES

A HELP-ING HAND

Football team supported by university in IPT League

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AS the “university of achievers”, HELP University prides itself on its students’ achievements, both in the academic and extra-curricular fields.

So, when its football team emerged second in Division 2 of the IPT (Institutions of Higher Learning) League, there was much for HELP University to shout about.

After all, its footballers have been in the ascendancy mode after bagging the league’s Division 3 title in 2015 (earning HELP University the honour of the first private university to win a division title), gaining automatic promotion to Division 2.

And by virtue of their second

placing in Division 2, they and the champions earned slots in Division 1, where the winners will get to play in the FAM League, the third tier of Malaysian football, after the Premier League and Super League.

The IPT League, which started in 2008 and now supported by the Ministry of Higher Education, is open to private and public universities, where players must be students of their respective college teams and be below the age of 28.

However, since the league, played on a round robin format of home and away basis, kicked off in September, the HELP University footballers have not been producing noteworthy performances, winning two, drawing one and losing four matches to date.

(There were supposed to be 12 teams in the league, but one withdrew, leaving only 11).



Members of the HELP University football team posing for a group shot. PIC BY RICKY YAP

S. Kannan, assistant manager in HELP University’s Department of Student Affairs, attributed these not-so sterling results to the departure of most of the team’s core players (after completing their studies) earlier this year.

“However, we hope to bounce back in our next three away games against Multimedia University (Cyberjaya - Nov 25), Universiti Putra Malaysia (Serdang, Selangor - Dec 2) and UiTM Pahang (Jengka, Dec 9),” said Kannan.

Kannan’s optimism stems from the fact that the HELP University team, lying ninth in the standings, have had played the league’s “juggernauts” in table-toppers Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris and defending champions Universiti Malaya.

There is an extra incentive for the HELP University team if they are among the IPT League’s top 10 teams since all – together with the top four teams from Division Two – will qualify for the Ministers Cup, to be played as part of the Higher Education Institutions

Sports Championships (Sukipt) next February.

In the past, the Ministers Cup was played as a separate tournament but will be assimilated into Sukipt from next year. The Sukipt will be held in Kuala Lumpur from Feb 2-10.

HELP University supports its football team by fully funding the costs for transportation, facilities, equipment, venues, jerseys, accommodation and meal allowances as well as the coach’s fees.

Kannan pointed out that HELP University does not take a single sen of the prize monies won by its footballers.

“The RM10,000 prize money won as Division Three champions and RM5,000 as Division Two first runners-up were shared equally among the players,” said Kannan.

Since 2012, the team have been trained by former national futsal player Josiah Loganathan, who also used to study and work in HELP University.

Training is conducted twice a week on Tuesdays and Thurs-

days at the Panasonic National Sports Complex in Shah Alam, which is considered as their “home turf”.

During the two-hour training sessions, Josiah will drill the players on techniques, fitness and sparring situations after undergoing 30 minutes of warm-ups.

Each April or May, Josiah will pick new players for the team. Training is suspended during the university’s semester breaks, unless there’s a competition where pre-season training will be conducted.

Lest one thinks that the footballers spend more time on the field than on their books, there’s no need for such assumptions.

This is because it is all a matter of time management as they learn how to balance both football and their studies.

Moreover, the players will pick up soft skills such as leadership and teamwork during their stint with the HELP University football squad, which have been around since the institution of higher learning were formed in 1986.