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Warriors fight back to leave Uniten feeling Blue

HOCKEY

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By Aftar Singh

KUALA LUMPUR: Blue Warriors exacted sweet revenge over women's league champions PKS Universiti Tenaga Nasional (Uniten)-KPT to win their second Vivian May Soars Cup title in three years.

Blue Warriors defeated the university team 3-1 in a penalty shootout after both teams failed to break the 2-2 deadlock in regulation time in the final at the National Hockey Stadium in Bukit Jalil yesterday.

Uniten, who won the league title with a better goal difference against Blue Warriors last week, started off well by taking the lead through national player Raja Norsharina Raja Shabuddin in the seventh minute.

They doubled the score in the 44th minute through Fatin Shafika Sukri.

But Blue Warriors, who won the Cup in 2016, came alive in the last four minutes to net two goals.

Former India skipper Ritu Rani narrowed the deficit in the 56th minute before Siti Zulaikha equalised in the 59th to force the match into a penalty shootout.

In the shootout, Narinder Kaur, Ritu Rani and Nadia Abdul Rahman scored for Blue Warriors while Wan Norfaiezah Mohd Saiuti netted for Uniten.

The star for Blue Warriors was national goalkeeper Farah Ayuni, who made superb saves in the shootout.

Blue Warriors coach Zulkhairi Ariffin said the match was a heart-stopper as they only came alive in the last four minutes to score twice to take the match to a shootout.



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"But at the end, it was a great day for Police (Blue Warriors) as we managed to snatch one title from Uniten. Hiring three guest players from India also paid off," said Zulkhairi.

UniTen coach Lailin Abu Hassan said the moment it went to a shootout, they knew it was going to be tough as Blue Warriors have the best goalkeeper in the country.

"But I'm still proud of my players' achievement because last season we did not win any title and did not even reach the final.

"There is vast improvement this season, and I believe we'll only return stronger next year," said Lailin.

In an earlier match, Terengganu Ladies trounced KL Wipers 10-0 to finish third.

Nur Hidayah Ismail (21st, 58th) and Norazlin Sumantri (33rd, 34th) each scored a brace for Terengganu.

Siti Rahmah Othman (third), Fazillah Sylvester Silin (fifth), Siti Noor Amarina (30th), Pahila Judith Larissa (50th), Nur Syuhada Suhaimi (59th) and Nur Syafiqah Zain (60th) contributed the other goals.