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Fabio blows his trumpet

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PENANG 1 PAHANG 0

IT may be a slim margin but it was enough for Penang, last year's FA Cup losing finalists, to savour the moment in this second round first leg match at City Stadium last night.

The only goal of the night, against current Premier One League leaders Pahang, came from a header by the industrious and tireless Brazilian Fabio Da Silva in the 30th minute.

However, it was not an easy outing as Penang were unable to field a full side despite the return of their suspended trio, defenders Moey Kok Hong and Rahim Hassan and midfielder Ng Kok Heng.

They were forced to troop in without five regulars, including first choice goalkeeper Ahmad Sobri Ismail. The others being defenders Fauzi Soh, Zaidi Mat Ail and strikers Merzagua Abderrazzak and G. Shanmugam.

Although depleted, it did not stop Penang from showing grit against an over-cautious Pahang side.

Except for a 12th minute attempt which Azizul Kamaruddin cracked at goal, Pahang were surprisingly sluggish in the early part of the game.

They earned five corners but none of them bore fruit, what with Penang's Olympic 2000 dropout Megat Amir Faisal, playing his first match of the season, on song.

In fact, Pahang were more than often scurrying for cover in their very own half than attacking.

So dominant were Penang, especially their hard-running trio of Fuad Mat Noor, Domi Che Non and Da Silva, that they had Pahang in sixes and sevens.

They came close to scoring as early as the sixth minute when Fuad crossed from the left to Domi, whose shot whizzed narrowly off the right upright.

Penang never gave up and continued their forays upfront. And when they took the lead at the half-hour mark, the 12,000 fans erupted and soon forgot about Penang's 3-0 defeat to Perlis last Saturday.

Off one of their numerous corners earned in the first half, Da Silva backheaded the ball which Ng floated from the right to put Penang in the lead.

Pahang took out their ineffective Russian, Viacheslav Melnikov, in the second half and it was only then did they begin to trouble the Penang defence.

By then, it was too late as Penang stood firm.

Penang: Megat Amir Faisal, S. Nanthakumar, Chee Wan Hoe, Yong Woon Seang, Rahim Hassan, Balla Conde, Fabio Da Silva (R. Suresh Kumar), Ng Kok Heng, Moey Kok Hong, Fuad Mat Noor, Domi Che Non (Mahathir Jamal).

Pahang: Mudzar Mohamad, Suhaimi Noor, Khairulniza Mustaffa, Ali Tahar, (Baharuddin Tahar) Azhar Kamaluddin, Kofi Ampiah, Jozsef Duro, Azizul Kamaluddin, Azaruddin Aziz, Ahmad Shukri Mustafa, Viatcheslav Melnikov (Shahrudin Rosdi).

Referee: Halim Hamid.

Crowd: 12,000.