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`Missing' Harris tarnishes Malaysia's image

MALAYSIA'S loss to Oman, while disappointing, was expected. However, what was totally unexpected was the way national coach Allan Harris shunned the media, including several foreign journalists, for the post match conference.

Not only did Harris tarnish Malaysia's image with members of the international media with his behaviour, the well regarded coach did not even bother to inform the local secretariat that he was boarding the team bus.

To make matters worse, instead of Harris, it was members of the secretariat who apologised profusely on the Englishman's behalf.

Harris, when approached later on the subject, claims he was in another room.

Malaysia, looking severely short on ideas and maturity, fell to a 1-0 defeat to Oman at the Masan Main Stadium in Masan last night.

"Initially he agreed to be interviewed but when we went to escort him to the post match conference, he was no longer there," said a member of the secretariat.

"I am very sorry for the situation, maybe it was due to some misunderstanding between the Malaysia's coach and us."

But that is not the issue. It was, after all, just 10 minutes after the match ended.

In fact, members of the local media wanted to interview Harris on the field but were informed to put the request in writing.

A request which Harris agreed to.

Harris may be disappointed with the result, and looking at the national team's performance, should be livid as well. But that is no excuse to shun the media.

Harris, and the FA of Malaysia should keep this in mind, and also remember that the media played a pivotal role in getting the soccer team included for the Busan Games.

And when the Olympic Council of Malaysia was deliberating on soccer's fate, FAM and Harris spoke for soccer's inclusion through the media.

At a time when even Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has expressed his concern for the fate of soccer in the country, it is disheartening to note that Harris saw fit to cop out from the interview.

And if this is what soccer officials resort to everytime they lose, Malaysian soccer is not in good hands.