

Najib's Presence A Morale Booster To Harimau Muda - Kim Swee
Bernama
7 Sept, 2013

KUANTAN, Sept 7 (Bernama) -- Harimau Muda A squad coach, Ong Kim Swee said the presence of the Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak was a major morale booster to the team to edge Singapore 1-0 in the opening match of the 2013 Pestabola Merdeka tournament at Stadium Darul Makmur, Saturday.

Najib, who was on a one-day visit to Kuantan, took time off to give a pep-talk to players who were also known as the National Under-23 squad at the players' changing room.

"It appeared the presence of the Prime Minister was a major booster to the spirit of the team even though we know he has a full programme here," he told reporters after the match.

Striker A. Thamil Arasu emerged as the toast of the national squad for putting in the solitary goal in the 46th minute.

On the match, Kim Swee praised the sterling performance by the young team despite playing on a wet pitch.

"The muddy field prevented players from showing their best but they changed their game from short passes to long balls which paid off.

"I am proud of the players' attitude in not giving up even though we missed a penalty kick," he said.

Kim Swee praised the performance of four players namely Putera Nadher Amarhan, Mohd Irfan Fazail, S. Sivanesan as well as substitute player, Muhammad Nazmi Faiz Mansor Nazmi who succeeded in creating problems for their opponent's defence.

"They have struck a deep understanding in changing positions to confuse the visitors and this was a brilliant tactic," he said.

Singapore's Under-23 Head Coach, V. Sundramoorthy also echoed Kim Swee's sentiment by stating that the bad pitch condition had caused his boys to display a below-par performance.

"The ball is stuck everywhere as we tried to keep and chase the ball...for me, it's not a beautiful game for us because of the pitch, besides we also missed several players (due to injuries and national team duty).

"The Malaysian side was quick to capitalise on the wet field but the most important thing for me is that my boys get good exposure during the game," said Singapore's football stalwart.

The 47-year-old coach who guided Lions XII to lift their first Malaysian Super League title this season said, the squad missed Muhammad Afiq Yunos who was given a marching order by referee Teetichai Nualjarn of Thailand which diminished their hopes to find an equaliser.

"I believe with the return of several key players from their national team, we could compete with any team in this tournament," he said.

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