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## **Patriots Snuff Out Dragons' Fire with Emphatic Victory**

**Manila, Sunday:** - At the Ynares Sports Arena in Manila, the top-seeded Philippine Patriots snuffed out the fire of the KL Dragons with some suffocating defense and put themselves one win away from reaching the finals of the inaugural Asean Basketball League winning 77-43 in game one of the best of three series.

The Dragons had beaten the Patriots earlier this month in Kuala Lumpur and if the Malaysian side had any thoughts of repeating that upset, such thoughts were very quickly erased as the Filipino stormed out of the gates and raced away to a double digit lead within a few minutes of tip-off.

It was a stroll in the park for the Patriots who even had the luxury of resting his import duo of Jason Dixon and Gabriel Freeman for the majority of the fourth quarter and earned coach Louie Alas a sweet measure of revenge for his team's loss in KL earlier this month.

The late addition of Freeman into their lineup has bolstered the already formidable lineup of the Southeast Asian powerhouses and his performance against the fourth-ranked Dragons was typical of the high-flying American, eventually finishing with 15 points and 11 rebounds, his third consecutive double-double since joining the league leaders.



From the very outset, the Patriots controlled the tempo of the game and the only thing keeping the Dragons in the game was the poor 3-point shooting of the home team in the first half. Exclusively utilizing a zone defence, the Dragons were content to allow their opponents to bomb away from outside and had the Patriots been more clinical from beyond the arc, their halftime lead would have been more impressive than the 30-16 scoreline suggested.

At the other end though, the Dragons simply had no answer for the tough defense being played by their hosts and their meager halftime output of 16 points was a statement of intent for the stifling man-to-man defense that has become a trademark of Alas' teams in the Philippines.

There was no let-up for the Patriots in the second half as they came out firing on all cylinders with Dixon capitalizing on a bizarre decision by KL coach Goh Cheng Huat to rest both his imports for the entire second half. Without Jamal Brown in the center, Dixon wreaked havoc on the feeble interior defense of the Dragons, scoring 9 points in five minutes of play and increasing the lead to 23 points for his side.

Dixon would eventually finish with 13 points and 10 rebounds joining his compatriot Freeman in the double-double category and by the time the bench was cleared for them, the match was well and truly dusted with thoughts now turning to game 2 of the series.

A measure of this Patriots side has always been their strength in depth and it was apparent again in this game as the Patriots received balanced scoring from their bench, headed by Val Acuna with 12 points while the Dragons received little support from theirs.



Both teams will have their adjustments to make but judging by the ease with which the Patriots were able to win, it is the Dragons that have their work cut out for them and coach Goh will have 3 days to figure out not only a way to stop the balanced Patriots attack but also where side's offense will come from.

The Dragons got virtually nothing from their top trio of Chris Kuete, Jamal Brown and Rudy Lingganay. Lingganay did reach double digits with 10 points to top-score for his side but his points came very late on with the outcome of the match a mere formality at that point. For Kuete and Brown, it was a tough night as they scored 4 and 7 points respectively, a tribute to the defense being played on them by the Patriots duo of Freeman and Dixon.

Game 2 will now be played in Kuala Lumpur on Wednesday night with the Dragons hoping for home comfort while the Patriots will look to close the series out.

Issued by : KL Dragons Sdn. Bhd.

For media enquiries, kindly contact :

Yap Ken Han  
Tel : +6012.266.4797  
E-mail : [ken@kldragons.com](mailto:ken@kldragons.com)



## League Standings

Pos.	Team	Played	Won	Loss	For	Against	Points
1	Philippine Patriots	15	11	4	1106	1023	26
2	Singapore Slingers	15	10	5	1133	1079	25
3	Satria Muda BritAma	15	8	7	1119	1075	23
<b>4</b>	<b>KL Dragons</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1093</b>	<b>1154</b>	<b>22</b>
5	Brunei Barracudas	15	6	9	1183	1234	21
6	Thailand Tigers	15	3	12	1109	1178	18

## Playoff Schedule

### Team 1 vs Team 4

Date	Time	Home	Away	Venue	Remarks
31-Jan-10	4.00pm	Philippine Patriots (77)	(43) KL Dragons	Ynares Sports Arena	Played
3-Feb-10	7.00pm	KL Dragons	Philippine Patriots	MABA Stadium	
7-Feb-10	4.00pm	Philippine Patriots	KL Dragons	Ynares Sports Arena	*if required