

# S-League 2016: What to look out for

With a host of high-profile signings, as well as the return of LionsXII players, this could be one of the most competitive S-League seasons in recent years. The Straits Times looks at the nine competing teams and their prospects.



## TAMPINES ROVERS

- **Key signings:** Jermaine Pennant (winger), Izwan Mahbud (goalkeeper), Fazrul Nawaz (striker), Shahdan Sulaiman (midfielder), Jordan Webb (winger).
- **Key player:** Pennant (left)
- **Last season:** Second

The club to watch. Besides Pennant, the Stags are peppered with experienced Singapore internationals. Coach V. Sundramoorthy is heavily favoured to guide them to the title.

## BRUNEI DPMM

- **Key signings:** None
- **Key player:** Rafael Ramazotti (striker, right)
- **Last season:** Champions

Last season's top scorer Ramazotti (21 goals) and Portuguese forward Paulo Sergio (13 goals) are back as DPMM bid to become the first foreign side to retain the S-League title. However, their challenge has been made more difficult following the release of key imports Boris Raspudic and Joe Gamble, owing to a new rule that allows only three foreigners to play.



## ALBIREX NIIGATA

- **Key signings:** Kazuki Mine (striker), Tatsuro Inui (midfielder)
- **Key player:** Atsushi Kawata (striker, right)
- **Last season:** Third

The loss of last season's Player of the Year Fumiya Kogure will hurt the White Swans' bid for an elusive first S-League title, after winning a Singapore Cup and League Cup double last season.



## BALESTIER KHALSA

- **Key signings:** Syafiq Zainal (winger), Jamil Ali (winger)
- **Key player:** Miroslav Kristic (striker, right)
- **Last season:** Fourth

Emerged as surprise contenders last season with 16-goal Kristic. While he remains, the loss of stalwarts Igor Cerina, Poh Yifeng and Ignatius Ang means the Tigers will be hard-pressed to repeat last year's title challenge.



## WARRIORS FC

- **Key signings:** Jonathan Behe (striker), Ismail Yunos, Madhu Mohana, Shaiful Esah (defender)
- **Key player:** Behe (above)
- **Last season:** Fifth

The 2014 champions are looking like strong contenders again after last season's disappointment. Frenchman Behe will lead the front line while internationals Madhu and Shaiful will guard the back.



## HOME UNITED

- **Key signings:** Irfan Fandi (striker), Faris Ramli (winger), Zulfahmi Arifin (midfielder), Khairul Nizam (striker)
- **Key player:** Ken Ilso (striker, right)
- **Last season:** Sixth

The Protectors will be hoping that Singapore Under-23 player Irfan, national team winger Faris, and former Fortuna Dusseldorf striker Ilso can fire them into the top half of the table.



## GEYLANG INTERNATIONAL

- **Key signings:** Sahil Suhaimi (striker), Gabriel Quak (winger), Daniel Bennett (defender), Faritz Hameed (defender)
- **Key player:** Bennett (above)
- **Last season:** Eighth

With five former LionsXII players, rookie coach Hasrin Jailani has it all to do to improve on last season's disappointing league position. Youth seems to be a key element, with several former Young Lions as well as former Youth Olympic Games players in the squad.



## GARENA YOUNG LIONS

- **Key signing and player:** Khairul Amri (striker, right)
- **Last season:** Ninth

Led by veteran striker Amri, the team comprising mostly Under-21 players will be eager to make an impression this season as they hope to make Singapore's Asean Football Federation Suzuki Cup squad.



## HOUGANG UNITED

- **Key signings:** Fumiya Kogure (midfielder), Jozef Kaplan (striker), M. Anumanthan (midfielder)
- **Key player:** Kaplan (above)
- **Last season:** 10th

The Cheetahs signalled their intent to improve on last season's bottom-placed finish with top signings Kaplan and Kogure, as well as a host of promising young players.

