

► The Newcastle United Supporters Club meets at Fluid Bar and Kitchen at Far East Square for matches. For more information, visit www.nufcsingapore.com

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What's new?: Mr Azli's recurrent ankle injuries may stop him from playing. Sharing the gloom are daughters Qykko, seven, Qystina, 11, wife Zaharah, 39, and son Matyn, five.

I love U... and Newcastle United

YOU could say Azli "Aeszlieboy" Mahmud married his two loves in 1992.

He and wife Zaharah Alwee were dressed in black and white at their wedding — the colours of his favourite team Newcastle United.

"At first, it was difficult to understand the fuss about it," says Madam Zaharah, who is 39 and works at a childcare centre. "But over time, I became interested in football, too."

The bicycle-shop owner started supporting the club the same year he got married.

These days, his passion extends beyond merely supporting the club. He has been actively involved in the 300-strong Newcastle United Supporters Club here, as captain and coach of its football team.

A former Combined Schools player, he plays striker and mentor to more than 20 players. He also sources for jerseys and sponsors the footballs.

When he opened his shop late last year, he quit the team for seven months. But he

couldn't resist the urge to return to the team that has "been so good" to him.

In fact, he does not open his Lavender shop on Sundays anymore.

Instead, the whole family — including three children aged five, seven and 11 — tags along for his matches every Sunday.

"I like watching my father play, he's very good," says his oldest child Qystina. She watches Newcastle games with her parents, because it's "more fun to watch together".

But Mr Azli thinks his playing days could be over soon. His ankle ligaments have been giving him problems for many years and he had two titanium pins inserted in an operation in 2000.

"I'm worried about his recurrent injuries. Every time he tells me it's hurting, I have to remind him to stop and not over-exert," says Madam Zaharah.

"But he always says he feels better after playing a game. It's his medicine."