

Onslow Boys win U13 trophy

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U13 boys football team Onslow Boys beat Kumar Takhmao in the final Sunday to become champions of the 2010 PricewaterhouseCoopers ISF U13 Tournament

THE third annual PricewaterhouseCoopers ISF U13 Boys Football Tournament held over the weekend at Phnom Penh's Old Stadium saw Onslow Boys emerge victorious after an exciting penalty shootout in Sunday's final.

The competition, hosted by local NGO Indochina Starfish Foundation (ISF) featured 23 NGO-based teams – hailing from Phnom Penh, Battambang, Kandal and Siem Reap provinces – battling it out in sweltering conditions, a week after a similar event for the nation's U16 girls was played out.

The ISF, through sponsorship from companies and individuals and in partnership with the Football Federation of Cambodia and Sports & Leadership Training (SALT) Academy in Battambang, support some 2,500 young Cambodian footballers across the Kingdom to participate in regular coaching and league competitions.

By 8am Saturday morning, all teams had arrived and players quickly donned their new kits to line up for a short opening ceremony. ISF Chairman Peter Slater and Leo Brogan, Trustee of ISF, led the opening match teams in a procession around the pitch whilst the rest took to the stands to await their turn and get a good vantage point to check out the competition.

The 23 teams were organised into four groups to play out round robin matches on quarters of the field. The top two teams from each group then qualified for Sunday's quarterfinal matchups.

With reigning champions the Seaside from Kandal province's Sunrise Children's Village failing to advance from the group stage, there was everything to contend for going into the knockout rounds.

Quarterfinals saw Koma Takhmao put the pressure on opponents the White Pigeons early on, but they failed to capitalise on numerous corner kicks. The White Pigeons, from NGO Homeland in Battambang, then took advantage of a slew of defensive errors to score the opening goal after 10 minutes.



Photo by: Tracey Steggall

Members of the Onslow Boys team from Phnom Penh NGO ASPECA celebrate their victory in the final of the PricewaterhouseCoopers ISF U13 Boys Football Tournament.



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An Aziza School player (left, blue) battles with an ISF Flying Tigers player (white) during their group match at Phnom Penh's Old Stadium Saturday.

However, Koma Takhmao finally made good of a set piece from the corner to equalise with a header just a minute later.

In the dying minutes of the match, a breakaway from midfield saw the ball lashed into the back of the White Pigeons' net, and Komar Takhmao stayed firm to progress to the semifinals.

On the opposite side of the pitch, Juice Master United from Phnom Penh's COLT took on city rivals Onslow Boys from ASPECA, in a game dominated by the latter from the offset. Only a list ditch tackle by the Juice Master United centre back stood a chance of a goal, but the team failed to convert it and the game ended 2-0 to Onslow.

ISF's own team, The Flying Tigers, met with the Northbridge Nomads from Phnom Penh's Sunshine Centre for Children in an evenly contested game. The quality of the fixture was credit to both the players and coaches. Northbridge Nomads winger Mao May produced a dazzling run down the right wing, beating two players before slotting the ball past the keeper. The solitary strike was enough to ensure the Northbridge Nomads a place in the next round.

The remaining quarterfinal pitted Sangkheum Center for Children from Siem Reap against the SOS Battambang side. After a very even game that saw the teams grab a goal apiece, tragedy struck the SOS boys, as the ball glanced off the head of a defender to nestle in their own net, and grant Sangkheum passage to the semis.

Fortune did not favour Sangkheum again in their next game against Kumar Takhmao, although some early goal action yielded two great attempts but no scores. The Takhmao team opened the scoring and then doubled their lead from a stunning halfway line shot, before adding a third moments later. Sangkheum netted a consolation goal in the last minute.

The Northbridge Nomads faced Onslow Boys in what proved a thoroughly entertaining second semifinal. Sublime touches and great vision made for some excellent passing work. In the end, Onslow came out 2-1 victors over Northbridge, with all goals the result of good teamwork.

The final was a showcase of the best talent this year, with the clash between Kumar Takhmao and Onslow Boys captivating the attention of the sizeable crowd. After 30 minutes of tense play, including a handful of close calls, the clock ran out with the teams still locked at 0-0. The excitement in the stadium reached fever pitch as the teams lined up for a penalty shootout. Onslow Boys held their nerve to edge out the Takhmao outfit 4-2 and claim the championship for ASPECA.

