

Sport

Girls' side seal Cup triumph on tour

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SURPASSING all expectations and belying their international inexperience, members of the combined Indochina Starfish Foundation and SALT Academy women's football team rounded off their tour of Singapore by finishing first and third in the seven-a-side Barclays Cup tournament.

"Victory for our team came against all odds and this successful tour has done a world of good for women's football in Cambodia," said Sam Schweingruber, the designated team coach who was forced to stay back in Phnom Penh after he was robbed of his travel documents, cash and a laptop barely hours before the team left for Singapore last week.

The coach was clearly in a reflective mood as players began their journey back home to various provinces after returning to Phnom Penh on Sunday. "It is bitter sweet for me," he said. "On one hand, I had this nightmarish personal setback; on the other, I was delighted that the tour went so well for our members on the pitch as well as on the social front."

The visiting Cambodian squad fielded two teams in the eight-team seven-a-side competition, which



A defender from the US Schools selection team makes a headed clearance off the line from a Kim Sopheak (number 9) effort during their friendly in Singapore. PHOTO SUPPLIED

involved 10 minute games and was hosted by the United World College at their Dover campus.

The first team clinched the title Saturday at the expense of Singapore American School with a thrilling 2-0 victory in the final after narrowly edging out their own second side in the semifinals. The SAS has scrambled through their semifinal 3-2 by way of a sudden death penalty shootout against Overseas Family School.

In the third place play off, Cambodia's B team came up with an extra time goal to pip Overseas Family School 1-0.

The sight of the imposing Jelan Besar stadium, where the side met a Singapore national U16 squad on November 22 for an 11-a-side friendly, was a jaw-dropping experience for many of the Cambodian team members, some of whom had never travelled beyond their own provinces.

Despite a nervous start, the visitors

struck first against the run of play when Kim Sopheak found the net. The Singapore youngsters stormed right back with two goals before half-time for a 2-1 lead. Despite a strong showing in the second half, the Cambodians failed to find an equaliser.

In their second friendly last Wednesday against a US Schools Selection side, striker Dep Panida and free-roaming midfielder Theary fired a goal each to steer the Kingdom's girls to a comfortable 2-1 victory. The squad was also involved in two practice games against Singapore school teams in the run up to the Barclays Cup.

The Cambodians attended several social get-togethers, and a visit to the famous Singapore Zoo was part of their sightseeing package. Plans are afoot for a return visit to Cambodia by a Singapore junior squad next year, and several schools in the city-state have also expressed their willingness to undertake a tour of the Kingdom. ■

Karlsson pips Poulter while Kaymer wins Race to Dubai

SWEDEN'S Robert Karlsson denied Ian Poulter back-to-back titles on the European Tour when he won the US\$7.5 million Dubai World Championship after a thrilling playoff battle that stretched to the second extra hole on Sunday.

Karlsson has had a dramatic past two years since finishing the 2008 season as Europe's top player. In 2009 he feared he was going blind following a debilitating eye problem, and he was out of action for more than a month this year with glandular fever.

But the Swede announced his return to vintage form as he first chased down and caught up with overnight leader Poulter, and then beat him in the playoff.

Karlsson said it was the biggest win of his career.

"I didn't have a clue at any stage that I could end up winning this," said the 41-year-old.

"This must be my biggest win if you just look at the quality of the field that's been here - world No1 [Lee Westwood], world No3 [Martin Kaymer]. It's a fantastic field, so to win here is just great."

While Karlsson and Poulter were battling it out, Germany's Kaymer finished tied 13th at six-under par 282 and won the Race to Dubai to become the new European No1, succeeding current Westwood in the process.

Kaymer, who turns 26 in exactly one month, has become the Tour's youngest No1 since Ronan Rafferty in 1989. The honour was confirmed the moment it was clear that his only challenger for the crown,

Northern Ireland's Graeme McDowell, will not be able to finish any better than tied third.

United States Open champion McDowell played the best round of his tournament - a four-under par 68 - but that was good enough only to tie him for the 13th place at six-under par 282 alongside Kaymer.

For Kaymer, the honour came with a bonus cheque of US\$1.5 million for winning the season-long Race to Dubai.

The German said: "It's been a fantastic year. All the goals that I set for myself, for my career, everything happened this year. To win the Race to Dubai, No1 in Europe, and to play the Ryder Cup, and to win a Major. So, we'll see how we can make it better next year." AFP



Martin Kaymer joins the greats of European golf by winning the 2010 money-list crown on the final day of the season at the Dubai World Championship. AFP

Federer enjoys final