

Youth tourney prepares teams for league season

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THE third Barclays Capital ISF Youth Football League, involving 46 teams, was formally launched at Phnom Penh Crown football club's field in Toul Kork on Sunday with a fun tournament that leads up to the December 11 start of the regular season at the same venue.

The highlight of the 2012 season, which stretches up to the end of March, is the addition of a second girls' division and introduction of a competition for U10 kids.

"The biggest improvement this year is the integration of deaf players into our weekly matches," Indochina Star Fish Foundation country manager Kate Griffin said yesterday.

"Following the success of the tournament for deaf players in March, 2011, ISF's program has grown to include weekly training of both boys' and girls' deaf teams in Battambang and Phnom Penh. This is the first step in ISF's goal to bring sports to children and youth with a variety of different abilities."

The day-long event afforded a team of deaf players from Krousar Thmey their first opportunity to play in an official competition. Though Krousar Thmey U18 girls lost 3-0 to a decidedly



An ISF Flying Tigers player (right) vies with a Krousar Thmey player in their U18 girls' game at the Phnom Penh Crown pitch. LEO BROGAN

stronger Flying Tigers, their grit and determination were there to be seen.

The day also provided a perfect platform for children with intellectual disabilities to socially interact with other youngsters.

"Too often in Cambodia, children with disabilities are not given the chance to interact and socially engage with the community in general. ISF is breaking that mould," Griffin said.

Members of the Hagar House of Smiles program were invited as spectators, but when one young girl, Pagna, showed some genuine football skills, she was quickly recruited to the ISF Flying Tigers team.

She had previously played in a football tournament for players with disabilities, but this was the first chance

for her to play in a game that integrated her with fully able players, much to the delight of her peers.

Pagna showed such enthusiasm and ability that she was invited to join the team for the rest of the season.

For the record, the junior wings of current Metfone C-League title holders Phnom Penh Crown notched up an impressive double, winning the U14 Boys Champion Division and the Premier Division.

It took Crown a penalty shootout to down ISF Flying Tigers 4-3 in the Champions class, but it was easy going in the Premier section as they downed Maruhan Japan Bank 2-0.

In their first real taste of competitive action, U10 side Blue Eagles – formed by residents of the relocation site at

Andong Village – turned the tables on Preah Khan Reach 3-1 in the finals after having lost to the same team 2-1 in the opening game.

Northbridge Nomads nosed ahead of CS Larrikins 2-1 in the penalty shootout to take the honours in the girls' U14 division after the sides had battled to a goal less draw in regulation time.

A lack of goals had also plagued the group stage, with neither Nomads nor Larrikins managing to put the ball into the net.

After the winners of the last two seasons, ISF Flying Tigers, were sent packing by the Coballers in the U18 girls' semifinals, there was no stopping this talented team.

The Coballers went on to beat ANDC Bulls 2-0 in the final. ■