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DU Sher-e-Bangla Cup champions

Sports Reporter

Dhaka University are once again the national soccer champions.

The star-studded outfit justified its top billing by outplaying Bangladesh Army three goals to one in yesterday's final of the 16th national championship for the Sher-e-Bangla Cup at Noakhali's Shaheed Bhul Stadium.

The victory also ended a seven-year drought for the university boys who had last won the title way back in 1981, as joint champions with Army. The year before too, the final had ended in a stalemate with these two teams sharing the glittering trophy.

The victory was doubly sweet for Dhaka University for it gave them adequate revenge for the defeat at the hands of the soldiers in the semifinals of the Bangladesh Games last December.

It was a rather one-sided affair, especially in the second half, with the university forwards mounting relentless pressure

on the Army defence. A heavy rain-soaked outfield ruled out enterprising football with both sides trying hard to find their footing for most of the goalless first-half.

Dhaka University should have scored at least twice in the first session but Illyas passed up a sitter in the very fourth minute after Shabbir had laid on a beauty in his path, and then Rupu shot wide from close after Shabbir had once again done the spadework. Army, too, saw one good chance go abegging as Mujibur failed to seize the opportunity.

Three minutes after the breather Dhaka University shot into the lead when Nurul Islam, loitering near the Army box, latched on to yet another Shabbir lob and rifled home a low, angular drive (1-0).

Seven minutes later Rupu made up for his earlier lapse by slotting home the ball inside the Army net upon a Shabbir pass (2-0).

All the while the Army defence sought for an answer against the fleet-footed University left-winger who proved more than a handful for them, always managing to give them the slip. Shabbir's speed and ball sense, in a class of its own, stood out like daylight and he not only won the day for his side but went on to garner the best player award for himself.

Any hopes that Army might have harboured of clawing their way back into contention soon evaporated when Illyas redeemed himself by putting the issue beyond doubt with a neat conversion upon a Nurul Islam minus in the 72nd minute of play (3-0).

The third goal made the university boys a trifle complacent and allowed Army to gain some consolation two minutes from time when skipper Shafiq headed home past national goalie Kanon upon a Shehab Ali corner kick (3-1).

Lacking in finesse, army often resorted to robust play, some of their tacklings bordering on the dangerous. As a result national defender Imtiaz Johnny was forced to leave the field on a stretcher. Later he was hospitalised with a badly twisted knee, an injury that could cost him dear.

Vice President Moudud Ahmed gave away the trophies as chief guest.

The final was also witnessed by NSC Chairman Maj. General Sadique Rahman Chowdhury, BFF chief Maj. Gen. Mahmudul Hassan, Secretary Abdul Rahim, MP, and other top BFF officials.