

Sports

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SOCCER

CHUNG CHOW/RICHMOND NEWS

Ireland beat India

2-1 in the open men's final at the 32nd annual Nations Cup Soccer Tournament on a misty Sunday.



Check out our Nations Cup gallery at www.richmond-news.com

BASKETBALL

X-Falcons go indoors to repeat as Dolphin Classic champions

BY MARK BOOTH
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Doesn't matter whether it's outside or inside, the X-Falcons are the kings of the Dolphin Basketball Classic.

The X-Falcons continued their dominance of the 26th annual Richmond summer hoop tournament, this time going indoors to defeat Athelite 80-65 in a rematch of the 2010 final. The team, which features Langara College alumni, has now four of the last five titles.

The championship game was overshadowed by the wet weather that had teams going back-and-forth from the two outdoor courts to the Thompson Community Centre gym throughout the weekend. The men and women's semi-final games were held outside but late afternoon showers on Sunday forced the tournament to conclude indoors. Fans had to cram around the court for the men's final with little in the way of space designed for spectators.

It marked the first time the championship game has been played indoors since the early 1990s when the tournament scrambled to the old Richmond High gym. More recently, some round-robin games took place at McMath secondary but the weather cooperated for the playoff games. Not this time.

"It's been a crazy weekend," sighed Bruce Watson, one of the Classic organizers. It's been very trying with a lot of obstacles and things we have never had to deal with. We persevered anyways."

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Experience defeats youth at Nations Cup

BY MARK BOOTH
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This time, experience got the better of youth at the 32nd annual Nations Cup Soccer Tournament.

Despite a huge contingent of supporters, India just failed in its bid to repeat as Open Division champions, falling 2-1 to Ireland on a rainy Sunday afternoon at Hugh Boyd Park.

The wet conditions didn't stop an estimated 3,000 fans cramming around the Boyd oval to take in a rematch of the 2010 final. The vast majority were cheering for an India side attempting to become the first back-to-back winner since 2002. Instead, Ireland silenced the crowd with a pair of first half goals and hung on for its second championship in four years.

The wet natural grass field slowed India's lethal transition game but so did some excellent defensive work by a veteran Irish squad which resulted in little space to generate scoring chances, despite India enjoying a significant advantage in time of possession.

Central defender Steve McAuley, who led Ireland in scoring throughout the weekend, made it 1-0 and Angus Burke doubled the lead

on a brilliant left-footed volley at the back post. Former Vancouver Whitecap Jeff Clarke missed a glorious chance to make it 3-0 in the second half when his open net shot banked off the goal post.

India, which had rallied from a 2-0 deficit to defeat England 3-2 in the semi-finals, got on the board with 10 minutes remaining but, this time, there would be no thrilling comeback.

"Everyone was fired up because of last year's result," said Ireland coach Craig Burnham, whose squad had earlier slipped past Africa 2-1 in the semi-finals. "It went our way this year. We took our chances and took advantage of some of the youth they had. We went for it and today was our day.

"We knew they were fast and would try to come at us.

"We tweaked our game from last year where we had some guys stay at home defensively more and it helped locked down the field so they couldn't play in the space they wanted to."

India coach Brindy Braich thought his young squad experienced a bit of stage fright in the early going, playing in front of such a large crowd. It was also the team's third game of the day, having needed penalty kicks to win its final

group game against Croatia on Sunday morning, before facing England.

"Just to reach the final back-to-back is a huge accomplishment," said Braich.

"It took a while for our kids to get their feet moving and by the time they got the wake-up call it was too late. A turf field definitely would have helped our speed but there are no excuses. The better team won.

"Just look at the size of crowd on this terrible day. I think the kids were a little nervous with that big of a fan base. We really wanted to (win it) for them but just being there is still a big plus."

Corner kicks

■ Canada's four-year run as women's champion ended with a 1-0 loss to Ireland in penalty kicks.

■ The *Richmond News* not only covered and sponsored the Nations Cup, but made a difference on the field as well. *News* reporter Alan Campbell's overtime golden goal lifted Scotland past Fiji in the Over 38 final. Scotland also won the Over 45 title with a 1-0 victory against China. ■ Ireland made it three division titles by also taking the Over 30 crown with a 4-2 win over Scotland.