



PHOTOS: ANISUR RAHMAN

HERE THE BROTHERS GO AGAIN: Players of Nitol-Tata National Football League champions Brothers Union (above) kiss the turf of the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur, where they won both of their titles this season, after their victory over Muktiyoddha Sangsad in the final last night. (Right top) Muktiyoddha goalkeeper Aminul Islam thwarts a Rajani Kanta Barman attack during the match. (Right) Brothers captain Alfaz Ahmed holds the trophy of the Nitol-Tata National Football League along with his teammates and officials after the prize-distribution ceremony.

## Double complete

### SPORTS REPORTER



National Football League on penalties yesterday.

The Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium perhaps hosting its last football game was treated to a real theatre when the Premier League champions after having spent

almost a decade in the wilderness celebrated their second trophy in a season.

Central defender Sujan stepped up to smash home the fifth and final spot kick into the net sending Muktiyoddha and country's number one custodian Aminul the wrong way to spark off wild celebrations among the band of brothers of a 20,000 strong crowd. His goal gave Brothers a 4-2 tiebreak win after 120 minutes of goalless stalemate.

Interestingly the same shootout hero, who became a villain two years ago while wearing an Abahani shirt, kept his cool this time after

Ritu, Nazrul and captain Alfaz scored their kicks from the spot.

Aminul however saved Parvez Babu's shot diving to his right. But Muktiyoddha's fate was sealed when Pradeep and Hassan Al Mamun hit the post despite Moni and Kabua kept the lottery drama going for the Reds.

With the two best teams reaching the grand finale, it was anybody's game, especially when the match was stretched to the shootout.

Muktiyoddha survived the last 17 minutes of the game playing with ten men after referee Mansoor Azad, who had a good game, sent midfielder Saiful Islam off for a

second bookable offence.

The shootout looked like a good omen for Shafiqul Islam Manik's boys after Brothers' first choice goalkeeper Biplab left the ground suffering a head injury just two minutes after kick-off. Biplab had a clash of heads with Muktiyoddha's Rwandan forward Kabua. But luck was not on their side when it mattered.

However Muktiyoddha captain Matir Munna created the first chance but his long freekick bounced off the upright much to the relief of the Oranges.

As it often happens in a final, both sides looked cautious and

there were no signs of last week's goal-feast, which Brothers won 4-2.

In a match full of counter attacks, defenders dominated and Brothers stopper Nazrul let fly a volley from 20 yards that sailed over the crossbar in the tenth minute.

Relying mostly on counter attacks, Muktiyoddha had their best chance in the 20th minute. But Saiful's brilliant run down the right came to nothing as an unmarked Moni hurried his header wide from a perfect cross.

Alfaz, who played like a man possessed despite being the most

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### SPORTS REPORTER



The moment Mohammad Sujan placed the fifth penalty past Muktiyoddha Sangsad custodian Aminul Islam in the shootout, he ran to the left touchline which soon became a sea of orange as all the Brothers Union players and support staff rushed there and huddled together in absolute ecstasy.

On the other side of the ground near the Brothers bench, one gentleman slowly made his way towards the source of celebration, his balanced steps interrupted only

by a hug from manager Amer Khan. This was a significant moment because Khan was expressing gratitude to the man who has got the Midas touch, coach Syed Naimuddin.

Brothers Union, the pride of Gopibagh, had won almost nothing in their three decades of top level participation until the arrival of Naimuddin. The veteran Indian, who has seen it all with that country's national football side as well as illustrious clubs of Kolkata was the final cog in Brothers' revolution to reach the summit of domestic football.

Yesterday they added the National Football League (NFL) crown to an unprecedented first

championship title in the Dhaka Premier League won earlier this season, both under the guidance of Naimuddin. It was easy to forget that Brothers were making their maiden NFL appearance having failed to qualify in the previous three editions.

The coach too was taken over by the momentous occasion amidst embraces and handshakes from familiar faces and totally unknown people saying thank you although his calm demeanor never showed it.

"This is definitely the greatest honour for me at club level. I have seen success with the Indian national team (SAF Football title in

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### IU football IU CORRESPONDENT

The Inter-department football tournament of Islamic University (IU), Kustia began yesterday at the university playground. Eighteen departments and three halls are participating the competition.

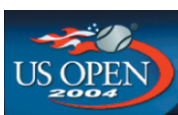
IUVC Prof M Rofiqul Islam presided over the opening ceremony.



PHOTO: AFP  
Top seed Roger Federer of Switzerland walks off the court as rain interrupts his match against American Andre Agassi during their men's quarterfinal at the US Open on September 8.

## Battle nicely poised

REUTERS, New York



The remnants of Hurricane Frances swept into New York to leave the eagerly-awaited US Open quarter-final between top seed Roger Federer and twice former champion Andre Agassi hanging in the balance on Wednesday.

Former champion Lindsay Davenport and ninth-seeded Russian Svetlana Kuznetsova dodged the showers to set up a semifinal clash in the women's singles but the rain returned to interrupt Federer and Agassi with the Swiss player 6-3, 2-6 7-5 up.

Fifth seed Tim Henman was also on the verge of a first US Open semifinal appearance, leading 22nd seed Dominik Hrbaty of Slovakia 6-1, 7-5, 4-5.

When play finally began on the Arthur Ashe Court, soon after 1945 local time (2345 GMT), Federer and Agassi were greeted by a half-empty stadium.

The predicted electric atmosphere did not take long to materialise

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## 'Mini World Cup' time



AFP, London

The ICC Champions Trophy starts in England on Friday with world champions Australia's bid to win the tournament for the first time adding fresh impetus to a competition that has so far struggled to capture the imagination of cricket followers worldwide.

Billed as the 'mini World Cup' its proximity to the main event -- this fourth edition comes a year after Australia were crowned world champions in South Africa -- means the Champions Trophy is overshadowed.

But it has one advantage over its 'big brother' in that, weather permitting, it lasts 15 days compared to the 43 days of a World Cup.

And yet it still features all the world's leading 11 teams, with the United States the lone representative from beneath an albeit tired elite.

The 12 sides are divided into four groups of three and these essentially pit two strong nations against one of the weaker teams.

Australia, the tournament favourites, will have to get past Tasman rivals New Zealand, one of the few sides capable of giving them a game in recent years, in a group that also features the United States.

Ricky Ponting, the Australia

captain has made it clear that, whatever anyone else thinks about the competition, his team will be treating it with the utmost seriousness.

"We are pretty disappointed with the way we have played in the Champions Trophy," he said.

"In the first two years we lost in the first round to India and we made the semifinal last time but got beaten by Sri Lanka."

Ponting added: "This is the second biggest one-day tournament and whilst we have managed to win the last couple of World Cups it would be nice to win the Champions Trophy as well and if we perform our skills well we should be in the mix."

Sri Lanka and India, co-holders of the Champions Trophy after the 2002 final in Colombo was washed out, will both be missing key players. Lankan off-spinner Muttiah Muralitharan, who holds the world record for most Test wickets record with 532, is out of the tournament because of a shoulder injury.

And India will have to do without master batsman Sachin Tendulkar, sidelined with an elbow problem.

However, Sri Lanka showed

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## AFC U-17 C'ship Bangladesh bow out

### SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh bowed out of the AFC Under-17 football championship when they suffered a 3-1 defeat against Iraq in their final Group D match at Koriyama in Japan yesterday.

The rank-outsiders needed a victory for a dream passage into the last eight of the championship but could only manage to hold the strong Iraqis to a 1-1 draw at the break. However Iraq, who took a 20th minute lead, fired two second half goals to confirm a place in the quarterfinals as group runners-up with six points from three games.

Mithun headed home a 44th minute corner for Bangladesh's only goal, but that was not enough to avoid their second successive defeat after a 6-1 thrashing at the hands of Qatar, who topped the group with seven points.

Qatar drew the other match with Uzbekistan against whom Bangladesh got their only point after a 1-1 draw in the opening match.

### What to WATCH

**BTV**  
ICC Champions Trophy  
England v Zimbabwe  
Live at 3.15 pm

**ESPN**  
Sportscentre  
Live at 8.30 pm  
English Premier League Preview  
Taped at 9 pm

**STAR Sports**  
Sportsline  
Live at 8 pm  
US Open Tennis  
Live at 9 pm