



A TRUE MARSHALL: Andrew Lee Tuck, the English forward who could not find the net in the final but was a driving force behind Terengganu FC's success with six goals throughout the tournament, marshalled his troops in grand fashion as his side beat hosts Chattogram Abahani 2-1 in the Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup final at the MA Aziz Stadium yesterday. (Inset) The champions celebrate with the trophy.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Terengganu stifle Ctg Abahani's dream

ATIQUE ANAM from Chattogram



Terengganu FC showed their superior technical ability in the attacking third to get the better of hosts Chattogram Abahani 2-1 in the final of the Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup at the MA Aziz Stadium yesterday. The Malaysian Super League outfit took a stranglehold on the game with two goals in the first 20 minutes, and despite conceding a goal early in the second half, the Southeast Asian club held on to their slender lead as the hosts failed to lift their game enough to stage a fightback worthy of champions.

The capacity crowd at the premier

Ctg Abahani (Rotkovic 47')	1 – 2 Terengganu FC (Hakim 15', Azalinullah 20')
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football venue in the port city went home disheartened with the hosts' dream of regaining the title ending with a whimper.

Terengganu coach Nafuzi Bin Zain had, throughout the tournament, talked about the superiority of his players in technical ability, despite their apparent physical disadvantage. His claim was validated by the two early goals, the second one in particular on 20 minutes, when Azalinullah Bin Alias, who missed the semifinal due to suspension, dribbled past Ikbol Jon with a couple of step-overs before sliding the ball under the sliding Yeasin Arafat and past goalkeeper Mohammad Nehal into the far corner of the net.

The goal came as a crushing blow for the hosts who had gone a goal down five minutes earlier when defender, Hakim Bin Mamat, who was left unmarked inside the box, charged on to a corner-kick from Lee Tuck and picked the corner of the net with a towering header.

Hakim is not the tallest man on the pitch, but he rose the highest to meet the ball as the Chattogram Abahani defence concentrated on the usual suspects from

FACTBOX

Player-of-the-final: **Hakim Bin Mamat**
Player-of-the-tournament: **Lee Tuck**
Top scorer: **Lee Tuck (6 goals)**
Fairplay trophy: **Chattogram Abahani**

ROLL OF HONOUR

YEAR	CHAMPIONS	RUNNERS-UP
2015	Ctg Abahani	East Bengal
2017	TC Sports Club	FC Pocheon
2019	Terengganu FC	Ctg Abahani

the set-piece.

Chattogram Abahani had fought back from the death in the semifinal and hopes were raised when Luka Rotkovic pulled one goal back two minutes after restart, his shot on a cut-back from Chinedu Matthew bouncing inside the line off the underside of the bar.

But two forced substitutions in the space of 15 minutes, the first one of right-back Rahmat Mia and the second one of attacking midfielder Jean Charles Didier, strained the available options for coach Maruful Haque.

The 57th-minute injury to Didier, who was the driving force of the team in the previous matches, was a big blow as the port city side failed to up their game in the attacking third following his departure. Rotkovic lacked support from the midfield and when he did get the ball, his lethargic movements failed to bring any result for his side. The closest he came to equalising was in the 71st minute when Arifur Rahman provided him with a cutback, but the Montenegrin forward failed to keep his shot on target from a one-on-one situation.

The Malaysian side, who were playing their first overseas international tournament, made a string of substitutions in an attempt to defend their lead and negotiated the rest of the match with little trouble.

'Small details are what matter'

SPORTS REPORTER from Chattogram



Chattogram Abahani coach Maruful Haque claimed that the two early goals and injury to two of his important players made the work hard for his team in the final of the Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup yesterday.

The home side went two goals down within the first 20 minutes, but were hamstrung by the injuries to right-back Rahmat Mia and attacking midfielder Jean Charles Didier as they looked to mount a fightback following Luka Rotkovic's goal early in the second half.

"Didier and Rahmat's injuries made us suffer. Didier plays the role of link-up between the defence and the forward line. So his injury and the one to Rahmat were big blows," Maruful said during the post-match press conference.

"Even I thought Luka [Rotkovic] didn't perform according to my expectations. After

getting the goal, he got hungry and tried shots from difficult angles where he should have looked to play the passes to his teammates," the coach said, further claiming that better defensive marking and goalkeeping could have averted the two goals.

Skipper Jamal Bhuiyan was disappointed at missing the opportunity to lift a trophy as captain. "I'm really disappointed. It was a big opportunity for me to lift the trophy," the 29-year-old midfielder said.

Chattogram Abahani had six foreign players in their squad, but used four of them in the final. One other foreigner, Prince Tagoe, was not tried in the entire tournament and another one, defender Petar Plane, was only used as a substitute in one of the matches.

However, Jamal implied that they were short in the foreign recruits department.

"I think we should have had two more foreigners in our side. We stopped Lee Tuck

and the Japanese striker [Brunon Suzuki], but couldn't stop the others. Small details are what matter in football," said Jamal in a frustrated tone.

The winning team's coach and captain were happy to finish as unbeaten champions in their first overseas appearance.

"It's a great achievement for our team. My team played fantastic football and we deserved to win for the style of football we play," Terengganu FC coach Nafuzi Bin Zain said.

The player-of-the-tournament and top-scorer Andrew Lee Tuck said he had the belief in himself to win the title and also praised the level of competition and the supporter's response.

"It's been a tough tournament, but it was worth it," the Englishman, who has taken his popularity to a new level with his sublime performances, said. "To be honest, I didn't expect it [the tournament] to be this good and didn't expect a full-house crowd."

Five things we learned from this tournament

ATIQUE ANAM from Chattogram

BETTER COMPETITION, POORER ORGANISATION: The tournament featured eight teams -- two from Bangladesh, three from India and one each from Maldives, Laos and Malaysia. The level of competition was much better than the previous editions according to everyone involved, however, from an organisational point of view, the tournament left a lot to be desired. There was a clear gap in communication between the hosts, Chattogram Abahani, and the Bangladesh Football Federation, the custodians of the country's football. Five matches in 10 days stretched the limit of resources of the teams and the constant tinkering with fixtures did not help the cause either.

GOALS GALORE: The third edition of the tournament saw 59 goals scored in 15 matches, beating the previous record of 54 from the 2015 edition. There were only 36 goals scored in the second edition in 2017. This high-scoring scenario could be attributed to teams having better attacking resources than in defence, with the majority of the foreign players of each team being forwards.

FOREIGNERS RULE: Of the 59 goals scored, 39 were scored by foreign recruits while only 20 came from homegrown players. Only one team, Young Elephants of Laos, played without foreigners and their journey ended in the group stages. With the regulation being a maximum of five

foreign players allowed on the field against a registration of six, the high number of goals by the foreigners only points to the fact that local forwards lag far behind their foreign teammates, not just in Bangladesh but also other leagues across South and South East Asia.

PEOPLE LOVE FOOTBALL AND SUCCESS: The tournament created quite a bit of excitement in Chattogram as well as other parts of the country. The matches featuring the host team drew massive crowds while the other games also saw reasonable attendance. There was widespread media coverage, even in the midst of tumultuous cricketing revelations, and the interest was not only limited to within the country, but supporters of teams from the other countries also followed their games closely on social media and other platforms.

RUNNERS-UP ON HIRE: Chattogram Abahani, the champions of the first edition, were eliminated from the semifinals of the second edition. In 2015, the hosts won the title with most of their players hired from other clubs, and this time too, they finished second-best with only one of their own players in the starting eleven. One of the coaches termed Chattogram Abahani as an 'artificial team' while Chattogram Abahani coach Maruful Haque himself said that even if they won the title, it would not bring any change to either the club or the country's football.

Football mania captivates port city

ARJUN BIKASH DEY from Chattogram



The MA Aziz Stadium in Chattogram was packed to the rafters yesterday as around 30,000 spectators came to watch the Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup final between Chattogram Abahani and Terengganu FC.

The match was scheduled to begin at 6:00pm but fans, many bearing drums and flutes, flocked to the stadium as early as 3:00pm.

Another 10,000 supporters, who were unable to buy tickets, remained outside.

Seventh grader Tauhidul Islam Ratul fifth grader Sajjad Hossain were two of the lucky few to have managed tickets not just for the final but also almost every other fixture of the tournament.

"I am a big fan of football but I do not get many opportunities to watch football in the stadium here," Ratul said. "That's why when I came to know that an international tournament would be held in this stadium [MA Aziz Stadium], I decided that I would attend every match I could."

Sajjad informed that he watches football on television regularly but had always wanted to witness a match from the stands.

"When I heard about the tournament, I asked my parents for their permission to watch every match [at the stadium] and they gladly accepted it," said Sajjad.

Iran Barua, who played first division football in the 1980s fir Muktiyoddha Krira Chakra, was present in the gallery as well. He praised the tournament organisers and emphasised on the need for more international tournaments in Chattogram.

"The more you organise international



PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

tournaments in the city [Chattogram], the more youngsters would be interested to become footballers," he said. "There was a time when players from Chattogram regularly went on to feature in the national team."

"Star footballers such as Ashish Vadra and Satyajit Das Rupu came from Chattogram but those days are in the past now. Organising more international tournaments would help bring back the glory of Chattogram football," continued Barua.

Septuagenarian, Ahmed Hussain, remembers the 2015 edition final well. Chattogram Abahani had beaten Kolkata East Bengal 3-1 to clinch the title of the inaugural edition and Hussain was hoping for a repeat this time around.

"I remember watching the match from the gallery and returning home with full content as Chattogram Abahani clinched the trophy by beating Kolkata East Bengal by 3 goals to 1. "Today I have come to see the same...the victory of the host team," he said.

Juventus superstar Cristiano Ronaldo is ecstatic after converting a 96th minute penalty for the winning goal against Genoa during their Serie A encounter at the Allianz Stadium in Turin on Wednesday.



PHOTO: AFP

CR7's late winner takes Juve to top

AFP, Milan



Cristiano converted a 96th-minute penalty as Juventus defeated Thiago Motta's Genoa 2-1 to reclaim top spot in Serie A on Wednesday, while Napoli were left seething after conceding a disputed late equaliser against Atalanta.

Ronaldo sat out the 1-1 draw at Lecce over the weekend but Juve looked set to drop more points on his return in Turin as Christian Kouame's fluke equaliser cancelled out a header from Leonardo Bonucci.

The Portuguese forward saw a stoppage-time strike ruled out by VAR for

offside before he won a last-gasp penalty after he was fouled by Toni Sanabria.

Ronaldo drilled the spot-kick low beyond Ionut Radu for his fifth league goal of the season to send Maurizio Sarri's Juve back above Inter Milan at the summit.

"It was a difficult game against a well organised team but Juve must keep going until the end," Ronaldo told Sky Sport.

"We suffered a lot tonight but we created a lot and deserved this win."

Genoa, in their second game under Motta, played most of the second half with 10 men after Francesco Cassata was sent off, while Juve substitute Adrien Rabiot was dismissed late on for two bookable offences.

Atalanta twice fought back from a goal behind to hold Napoli to a 2-2 draw at the San Paolo, where a fiery ending resulted in red cards for Carlo Ancelotti and his assistant.

Josip Ilicic struck a contentious 86th-minute equaliser that was upheld following a lengthy VAR review, as Napoli appealed for a penalty.

Napoli forward Fernando Llorente tumbled to the ground after jostling with Simon Kjaer in the Atalanta area before the visitors countered and scored through Ilicic.

A five-minute interruption followed before the referee awarded the goal without reviewing the incident on the touchline monitor.