



AI Shorta's Greatest Moments - Number 24: AI Shorta win first 'worldwide' trophy (1983)



AI Shorta were invited to play in the 1983 edition of the President's Gold Cup, which took place in August and September of that year in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The Police won the tournament, which was, at the time, the fourth tournament AI Shorta had won outside of domestic competitions. It also remains the only competition AI Shorta have won that contained teams from all around the world, rather than a select region such as Asia or the Arab world.

There were two groups of five in the tournament, Group X and Group Y. AI Shorta were placed into the latter with South Korea XI, Bangladesh Red, Thailand national team and Nepal national team. Group X consisted of Malaysia

national team, Middlesex Wanderers (an English club), India B national team, Jilin (a Chinese club) and Bangladesh Green.

AI Shorta's first game was against South Korea XI on 30/08/1983 and they drew the game 1-1. Five days later, AI Shorta went up against Thailand's national team, and against many people's expectations, defeated them in an emphatic 4-2 victory. AI Shorta faced the national team of Nepal next, and once again won the game very comfortably; it ended 3-0 to the Police. A 0-0 draw against Bangladesh Red followed but it was enough to send them to the semi-finals. Group Y finished with AI Shorta on top with six points (each win counted for two points), South Korea XI behind them in second, Bangladesh Red in third, Thailand in fourth and Nepal at the bottom.

In the semis, AI Shorta faced the only English team in the tournament, Middlesex Wanderers, on 08/09/1983. Middlesex Wanderers had finished in second place in their group behind Malaysia. A pulsating encounter finished in a 2-2 draw which meant that penalties would decide who would face Malaysia in the final, who had defeated South Korea XI 3-2 in the other semi-final which took place a couple of days before AI Shorta's semi. The penalty shootout ended in a 4-3 victory for the Police, sending them to the final against Malaysia.

Surprisingly, and unfairly, the final took place only a day after AI Shorta's hard-earned victory over English opposition. However, the fatigue of the AI Shorta players did not affect the result as AI Shorta went on to comfortably win the final 2-0 against Malaysia and win the President's Gold Cup. The Malaysians had no answer to the speedy display of the Iraqi side, with Nasir Jasem's 18th-minute goal opening the scoring and Adnan Khatom sealing the cup on 70 minutes. It was the only time AI Shorta participated in the tournament, and they did themselves proud.

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