

# CLASH OF THE SOCCER-TITANS

Believe it or not, the SMA-Eagle Eye Centre Inter-Hospital Soccer Tournament held on 9 May is the 41st run of the annual inter-hospital soccer tournament. This year, the tournament was held at neither the hallowed grounds of Alexandra Hospital as in the initial years nor the grand Jalan Besar Stadium as in the latter years, but at the freshly-laid grounds of the Home United Youth Academy. Never a tame affair, the tournament is more akin to a proxy war between the hospitals to see who would win the bragging rights as victors of the fields.



Group A comprised four teams. Geriatrics United was the veteran Private Practice team, which bred the oldest players. The dentists declined to send a team for the tournament this year. In their place was the first guest appearance of the Nurses team, cobbled from all the hospitals in the nation. This was not a rag-tag, hastily assembled outfit that just made up the numbers; rather it resembled a professional team studded with skilled players and foreign talents. The Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) team hoisted young blood with their fiery power, while Singapore General Hospital (SGH) was the perennial favourite with their deep pool of talent. The pharmacists entered two players who were absorbed into the Private Practice team.

Group B was a wee bit more congested with five teams. A younger Private Practice team was formed and participated under this group. Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) had an amazing constellation of soccer stars and was heavily tipped to win, while KK Women's and Children's Hospital (KKH) also managed to send in a team this year. National University Hospital (NUH) was threatening with

intent, with their cleverly scouted team of cherry-picking young interns to liven their team. Khoo Teck Puat Hospital (KTPH) made their maiden debut as a single team. Defending champions, Changi General Hospital, opted out this year, as they felt they were unable to field a side that would do justice to their proud record.

### THE BATTLE BEGINS

Beginning last year, the organising team, led by Dr William Kristanto of NUH, introduced simultaneous matches whereby four soccer teams played on two full-length soccer fields, while another set of teams practised and prepared on a third field. With that, teams no longer rested and twiddled their thumbs in between the games. Instead, the games came fast and furious, an unrelenting surge of soccer battles one after another, under the harsh gaze of the sultry sun.


Surprisingly, or unsurprisingly, it was the Nurses that topped group A. If the rest of the teams were expecting a squad composed of members of the fairer sex to grace the fields, they would have been sorely disappointed. Instead, they

encountered a team of hardy men who gave no quarters and pulled no punches. In a tempestuous match between the Nurses and the Private Practitioners, which saw three penalties, the Nurses nicked the game 2-1 when Geriatrics United failed to convert one penalty.

Geriatrics United contested KTPH for the third place and emerged the victor when Ying Zhou slotted the solitary goal. The final match between the Nurses and TTSH was bitterly fought. A sliding tackle by a nurse resulted in the referee issuing a red card to the perpetrator. Dangerous play by the nursing goalkeeper led to another penalty, which TTSH failed to convert. As the seconds exhausted, the Nurses were able to tenaciously weather the onslaught to emerge Champions by a single goal.

Muhammad Fairuz for KKH, Mohamad Farid for SGH, Soon Hock for SAF, T Jegathesan and Edward Zhang for TTSH, Jerome for KTPH, Ganesh Ramalingam and Charles Tan for Private Practice, and Bharmu Sharma the pharmacist are just a few of the many outstanding

**PROFILE**



TEXT AND PHOTOS BY

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Dr Chng Nai Wee is an ophthalmologist at Eagle Eye Centre, practising at Mount Alvernia and the Parkway Group of Hospitals. He keeps fit by playing 11-a-side soccer at the various fields across Singapore in happy defiance of his age.

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Legend

1. The Private Practice team (group B) in green-purple jersey  
2. The Nurses team in blue jersey with the TTSH team in red-black jersey

players in this year's tournament. Eagle Eye Centre sponsored this year's tournament and a set of resplendent coloured jerseys for every member of each team, while Otsuka Pharmaceuticals Co. Ltd sponsored a well of ice-cooled Pocari Sweat drinks.

The organisers intend to hold a night tournament on artificial pitches with flood lights in 2016. A night game will surely be cooler and more enjoyable for the players. There will be a greater emphasis on skill and less on fitness. It is our hope that more families, friends and supporters will also come to make this annual tournament a happy festive gathering. ♦