

## Singacup 2017



### The tournament that makes you fall in love with the country

Last year, in November 2016, after my final whistle in my last game at SingaCup 2016, I thought: "Well, this was a fantastic experience, it is sad it came to an end but I am really happy I came here, met some wonderful people, seen a beautiful city and enjoyed different football and culture for almost two weeks. I'm going to miss this in the future". Then 2017 came, I had some wonderful things happening in my personal life, became much busier and I thought I could only go to one tournament, Norway Cup. Which I really enjoyed. But then REFEX announced there are places available for referees to officiate at Singa Cup 2017 and I just couldn't resist. "I did what I had to do", as the song goes. So here I was again, walking on that soft carpet in the spectacular Changi Airport, surrounded by a bunch of German, Slovakian and Swiss referees and friends (the Danish friends flight had a delay but they made it eventually). I was surprised just the same as on my first time by the contrast between the cold refreshing AC inside and the hot humid weather outside. That first step outside in the scorching hot air is Singapore's welcome and at the same time warning. You get all the warmth you need, sun is there for you every day, but do not underestimate its power. That was actually one of the advices that more experienced REFEX members and leaders, like Michael and Knut, gave to the referees that were there for the first time: lots of sun lotion and do not waste your "gas" in the first few matches. The advice was followed and no member of "Team REFEX Europe" got injured or missed any games.

After enjoying one day of rest in the excellent hotel rooms, tasting the fantastic variety of Asian food or "just" visiting the city, we started the "work" and were happy to meet (again, some of us) with our "host", Megat, and the Singapore referees, friendly and nice as always. Football was good, weather was perfect during the first 3-4 days, sunny and nice. Of course, being Singapore, the regular thunderstorm eventually came and interrupted the games for 30-40 minutes, but everything went back to normal once the lightning stopped. Just business as usual in Singapore, and all of us accepted (not that there was any other choice...) the heavy rain that came out of nowhere the next day and almost flooded the pitches. Speaking of pitches, all the games were played on artificial ones and all was well, there was no interruption or cancelled game, which helped the organizers stick to the very busy and precise schedule.

The REFEX leaders and Megat did a great job with our match schedule, so while we were very busy for half a day, officiating in teams of three, in up to 5 games, we

were also able to enjoy the other half of the day shopping or walking in the city. Marina Bay, the shopping malls, the parks, Chinatown, Clarke's Quay, Sentosa Island, Little India, the Zoo, the restaurants, Dhoby Ghaut Mall, the river cruise are just a few of the places and activities that one can enjoy and we tried to take advantage of every free moment we had. Especially with the MRT (underground) so fast, clean, efficient and not expensive at all.

We enjoyed working together and refereeing teams from Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, India, Australia, Thailand etc, football was good and the final day came much quicker than we would have liked, making us realize that time went really fast, doing something we love and spending our free time in a truly wonderful city. The teams that were crowned champions had their medals, cups and pictures, the organizers got lots of applauds and thanks (well deserved, they really did a great job). The referees got handshakes and congratulations, and of course the occasional "Ref, tell me why did you ...?..." Megat, Michael and Knut were awarded medals for their contribution as referees leaders and we were happy to applaud them for their hard work keeping everything working on time for us, the European referees. We enjoyed the team dinner at Nando's in Dhauby Ghaut, although some of us admitted they felt sad as a wonderful time together was coming to an end. Being one of the wisest persons in the world, I reassured them that every end is just a perfect occasion for a wonderful new beginning... ☺

On a personal note, this year no taxi driver asked me if I want to buy a monkey (that did happen back in 2016), but I think my cat would not have been happy, and I don't even want to think of the legal complications... But there's always next year... (seriously, DO NOT BUY MONKEYS or other animals from unknown people in Singapore or any other countries where you go to referee in tournaments).

That brings me to the other personal note ! (my secret aim, with these personal notes, is to make REFEX leaders regret they allowed me to write this report...). The other personal note is that I intend to apply for a place at SINGA CUP in 2018 as well, and I almost convinced my wife and daughter to join me for a trip there, as Singapore is my favourite place in the world.

To conclude, Singapore is great and Singa Cup is totally worth the long and tiring journey from Europe, thanks to the people that make it possible with their hard work, and also thanks to the cooperation between REFEX and our hosts. See you in 2018, Singapore !

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