



Saigon International Football League

Sun April 12th 2009
Thu Duc Sports Uni

Raiders 1 Binh Khanh 3



Squad: Vu, Miquel, Les, Richard, Sasha, Liam, Henno, Ben, Jens, Paul, Oliver. Subs: Khalid and Chris

Raiders ran out on another steamy Sunday Saigon afternoon to face Binh Khanh, an unknown local team at the Sports University in Thu Duc. Similar to the previous weekend the Raiders were understaffed with only two subs to share between the forwards, midfielders and the defence. This meant having to push Sasha, who proved his defending credentials superbly the previous weekend, into a wingback position.

The confidence of the last two weeks' victories showed from the start as the Raiders passed the ball around quite smoothly, and won many of the fifty/fifty tackles. Raiders etched out a couple of decent opportunities, one of which saw Oliver forcing the keeper into a spoiled save from the edge of the box, but unfortunately no one followed up the spilt save. Binh Khanh had very few opportunities of their own, mainly keeping Jens and Sasha busy on the right through their number thirteen who proved to be the most difficult to handle throughout the match. A lack of quality crosses and a well-mustered, stoic defence, led again by Richard and Miquel in the centre kept Binh Khanh off the scoresheet until the about half-way through the first half. Miquel brought down an opposing player a few metres outside the right-hand edge of box. Despite Les literally kicking an opposing player out of the wall (and to his credit, as Les pointed out a few times, the opposing player "didn't try it again"), their number thirteen stepped up and put one up and over the wall, and past Vu, who should have done better.

Having gone a goal down, Raiders pushed a bit harder, and winning a few corners coupled with a hard-working, engine-room performance by Ben and Liam in the midfield, managed to win a mirror freekick outside Binh Khanh's box. Khalid stepped up and curled the ball temptingly towards the far post, missing all the Raiders players, but luckily also the keeper and nestled in the right corner of the goal. A fatigued Raiders team were lucky to hear the half time whistle and reorganise.

What the Raiders thought would be a cooler second half, turned out to be, well, not. The fitness of the younger Vietnamese team started to show and the energy-sapping afternoon saw more loose passes and fifty/fifty challenges tipping the match in favour of the Vietnamese. One of the Binh Khanh players attacked from the right, while the Raiders' defence backed off, allowing him to take a pot shot from about thirty yards out and again the ball looped over Vu who had come too far off his line, leaving many Raiders rubbing their eyes with a strong feeling of *deja vu*.

The second goal seemed to suck the morale out of the team, but the Raiders still managed to carve out a few chances, but Chris, who was suffering from a mysterious tropical disease, looked weak and only managed one scrambled shot across the face of the box all game. Oliver found himself with a clear shot on target, only to be called offside. Raiders started running on reserves and, together with a few makeshift substitutions that saw Paul pushed into central midfield and Oliver at left-back by the end of the game, were slowly being broken down. A Binh Khanh player again found

some space about thirty yards out and attempted an audacious lob, which flew in a high arc and left Vu watching the ball fly over his head for the third time, whilst some muttering of 'tying Vu to his goal line with a bungee cord for the next match' was overheard from the sidelines.

The game ended 3-1 – astoundingly Binh Khanh only managed three shots on target, all of which found the back of the net. So, despite a strong first half, the second half was well-summed up by Oliver's post-match Irish analysis of "We were fookin' flat-footed, lads."