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# EL JUEGO MATINAL

*"Where the truth never gets in the way of a good story..."*

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## **A day of Heroes and Glory at the Ambassadors' Soccer Fiesta**

By Ricardo.

It was probably one of the most memorable days on our history as amateur players (I know it was for me at least.), as we joined a **World Cup** of sorts, not just as vivid spectators, but rather as direct participants representing the colors of our home nations (or neighboring friends). I'm sure that is one of the most revered dreams we all had whenever we talk about going to a world cup...

The tournament involved teams from 32 country embassies stationed here in Singapore, each one with teams of 8 players, though the games of 7 minutes each half, only allowed 5 players per team with an unlimited number of changes on a 20x30 field at the Padang area with very nice posts and nets !! Weather-wise, it was hot and humid. A rare event in for Singapore, as you all know..

From our 'Sunday game' we had representation for both **Argentina** and the combined team of **Panama** and **Colombia**. Though for the real nationalities of the team members, we were all as global and diverse as our Dominical Juego Matinal.

The **Argentinean team won the 3rd** place of the tournament, after an admirable performance throughout the day. See the results below:

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There were a number of shining stars in the Argentinean team: **Nacho** scored 2 goals, but Javier was the scorer of the day with the most goals (9 in total). However, **Conrado** will get the price for the most beautiful goals, after he received a perfect pass from **Mariano** from across the field, and kicking the ball while still up in the air, Conrado did a scissor-kick that launched the ball into the goal keeper’s net, leaving everybody gasping in surprise and admiration.

Now, if this was not convincing of Conrado’s skill, try this: He did it again against no other than Thailand (the ultimate tournament winners), at a moment in which Argentina was 1 goal under and was in desperate need to get an morale booster, which it did. However, there were only a few minutes left and it was not enough time for the Argentinean team to make things even. Javier later admitted that Conrado’s goal on that game brought tears to his eyes...

| First Round |   |           |
|-------------|---|-----------|
| Argentina   | 3 | Finland 0 |
| Argentina   | 1 | Turkey 1  |
| Argentina   | 5 | Brunai 0  |
| Argentina   | 0 | Peru 0    |

| Group of 16 |   |          |
|-------------|---|----------|
| Argentina   | 1 | Turkey 0 |

| Group of 8 |   |            |
|------------|---|------------|
| Argentina  | 1 | Thailand 2 |

| Quarter Finals |   |         |
|----------------|---|---------|
| Argentina      | 2 | Wales 1 |



Both **Chi** and **Xin** also join the Argentinean crusade, along with ‘**Pepe**’, the Malay goalkeeper. And as always, they proved to be a valuable addition to the team. There is even talk that the Argentinean government is considering making them Honorary citizens, and give them the keys of the city of Buenos Aires. They are considering the offer, and are currently consulting their tax lawyers.

It was also a great sight to see **Victor** and **Mariano** playing together in the same team. They formed an unbreakable defense wall that left their opponents little opportunity to come closer to their goal.



After losing to **Thailand**, Argentina played against Wales for the 3<sup>rd</sup> place. Nonetheless, the winning results for Argentina throughout the one-day tournament, speak mountains of the caliber and quality of our Sunday games.

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## Panama: 8<sup>th</sup> Place



As for the **Panama/Colombia** team, - which included players from Panama, Colombia, New Zealand, Germany, Malaysia and even the USA (if you count my double citizenship) - also had a stellar performance throughout the day. (See their results below)

### First Round

|          |   |            |   |
|----------|---|------------|---|
| Pan/Col: | 1 | Bangladesh | 1 |
| Pan/Col: | 2 | Poland     | 0 |
| Pan/Col: | 0 | Chile      | 1 |
| Pan/Col: | 3 | USA        | 0 |
| Pan/Col: | 5 | Singapore  | 4 |

### Group of 16

|          |   |         |   |
|----------|---|---------|---|
| Pan/Col: | 2 | Germany | 0 |
|----------|---|---------|---|

### Group of 8

|          |   |          |   |
|----------|---|----------|---|
| Pan/Col: | 0 | Thailand | 1 |
|----------|---|----------|---|

For some reason we thought that both Poland and Germany were going to be much more difficult than they were. And as for the US team, well, I think they only came to our side of the field once. The rest of the time, they were busy fighting off the killer trio of **Camilo, Ian and James**.

The starts from our team included little **James**, (Camilo's friend) who after that day will be remembered as one of our biggest stars for all the great goals he scored: Two against the US and one against Poland.



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For some mathematical coincidence at the end of the first round, the **Singaporean** team and ours were in the same position. That is, we were both competing for a place on the second round and it was decided by the judges that a (sudden death) penalty shoot out would break the tie.

After we were 4-4 on the penalties, it was quite unfortunate that the Singaporean goalie blocked the following shot, which fortunately for us, I blocked as well when it became my turn, bringing us again to be at par with them.



After that, it was **Mike's** turn to take a shot at the penalty, and with the coldness and tranquility of the best world players, he rocketed the ball behind the goalie killing the Singapore team's hope of passing on that round of penalties.

The final stroke for the Singapore team came after that when I blocked the shot made by Associate professor *Ho Peng Kee*, giving the victory to our Pan/Colombian team. The crowds went wild after that, they ran into the field and all congratulated me on the achievement. (which blocking a shot is an achievement for me in any light, but this one was particularly special)

Though *The Sunday Straits Times* did not publicized how the Singapore team was kicked out, but here at the “**Juego Matinal**” we felt it to be our journalistic duty to report and embellish the truth about the tournament.



Thinking retrospectively, I remember being quite calmed during the penalties shoot out. And I was also quite touched when they all came and celebrated with me. I'll remember this day as one of my highlights from my Singapore experience.

Our defeat to the **Thailand** team (who were the ultimate winners of this world cup) was well fought out to the last minute. It was also them (Thailand) who defeated the **Argentinean** team, so having lost to the champions is quite respectable in itself.

It yet remains to be seen who would have won, had our two teams met that day in the tournament? Stay tuned, and come to our **Juego Matinales** to get the weekly answer to this everlasting question...

See you there this and every Sunday,

**Ricardo.**