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## Ladies football gusto!

**Sadia Kamal**

It was an anticipated mildly cold morning, and marked the last day of November. The year was 2014. The whole night and starting of the day was like a boiling cauldron of anxiety, nervousness, excitement, fear and maybe just a bit of confidence within each player. Remembering and going over all those strategies, formations and contingency plans we had made during the practice sessions felt fresh. Yes, this was a very important day for the BRACU Girls football team. A taste of victory had already been submerged within us, as this year, we were the defending champions of the tournament in 2013.

We were not ready to lose the title at any cost but simply strive to become champions again this year. Every year, the team awaits especially for this futsal (indoor football) tournament. The tournament was hosted by an outstanding and creative youth organisation called 7TEEN Events, a startup founded by Sheehan Rahman, an IBA alumnus and his friends. He had the vision to start a whole new lifestyle for the people to relive their youthful exuberance through organising events of sports, eating competitions, concerts, etc. The tournaments have always been a success as they are thoroughly enjoyed by the players, the spectators and organisers themselves.



Our squad comprised of regular starters and new faces with a strong spirit to play football. The starting lineup had Farah Qazi Iqbal, winner of the best goal keeper award; Nusaiba Nasseree the newest and the finest recruit, a fearless striker and play maker; Fairouz Nawar, the fast paced right forward; Faiza Rashid, also among the new recruits and displayed strong centre back defending skills; Sadia Kamal (myself) as the strategic, defensive midfielder and captain. Before I move on,

I would like to mention a very important person who had been a part of the team, a sheer backbone of BRACU Girls football team and former captain, Saveem Shama. A friend and a footballer the team admires deeply. A footballer who I had played against in opposing school teams, to being teammates at 7 Nation Army Girls football team, and up until university level football. Yes, we have come a long way! However this time around she had just graduated and was by no choice an ineligible player for the squad. A person who I would dearly miss during the tournament because the team was short of a strong midfielder. However, we knew we had to fill in the cavity and give in three times the effort than last time.

As we arrived at the stadium, we spotted our rival teams from East West University, North South University, IBA and Bangladesh University of Professionals. Immediately, we sensed the competition was fiercer than last year, as there were more number of teams as well as confident players. We played group stage matches with each team and moved up to the semi-finals with four wins and a single draw. Goals were scored by myself and Nusaiba. Zero goals were conceded thanks to the tremendous defensive line that was nearly impossible to break. Soon, dawn broke to dusk and the feeling of playing in the semi-finals, under the stadium lights, became electrifying. Energy and stamina were surely not at a high, but the level of determination, strive and sheer will power gave us the boost we needed. Hard work paid off and we owned the semi-finals match like champions.

Onto the finals. We were up against the second strongest team, also the runners-up of last year's tournament North South University. We knew victory wouldn't be too sweet. Scores were nil-nil until the last minute of the exhausting thirty minutes of the game. The pressure built every second, as there was a dire need to score just one important goal. A penalty shootout was not desirable from either teams, as chances of winning becomes a matter of pure luck. I ran up to the centre line with more risk than I should have taken, and a do-or-die spirit. Stopped the ball from being passed to the opponent striker. It took a far aimed but strong right-legged shot.

The ball hit the back of the net and we got the goal we desperately needed! The whistle went off and the intensity filled, quiet stadium broke into a roaring cage of tigers. BRACU Girls had just won the finals by a score of 1-0. There we were making a human mountain out of triumph, hugging each other as tightly as we could and breaking into tears, while thanking the Almighty Who gave us strength to fight until the last minute. BRACU Girls Football team had the vision and dream backed by persistence to reach the top and stay at the top. Today BRACU Girls Football team remains undefeated champions till the awaited Intra-University Futsal Cup 2015 arrives.