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Ghantoot live up to expectations

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GULF NEWS

Ghantoot Al Basti finally lived up to their tag of favourites when they quelled the challenge of K&K 7-5 to emerge winners of the \$200,000 His Highness Khalifa bin Zayed second Polo Cup here yesterday.

Marcos Heguy played the stellar role with three goals and was assisted by Gonzalo Azumendi with two while young and promising UAE player Humaid Al Draï chipped in with two goals. For K&K, another brilliant display by Hugo Barabucci, who was literally all over the field, went in vain. Barabucci scored four while Jose Araya scored the other.

Sheikh Dhiyab bin Zayed Al Nahyan distributed the handsome trophy and individual prizes to the Ghantoot players, winners for the second successive year. K&K started off well and after Araya missed a good chance

off Barabucci, took the lead through the former.

Barabucci, an eight-goal player and the man in form after his seven goals in the semis, once again churned out a fine allround display to please the large crowd yesterday. However, after Araya's goal, which came after a fine controlled effort by the nine-goal player from Argentina, Ghantoot hit back.

Marcos Heguy, the 10-goal player took time to settle down but his six-goal colleague, Gonzalo Azumendi levelled scores with a blazing run. Just before the chukka ended, Marcos took the aerial route following a penalty to put Ghantoot ahead 2-1.

A 60-yard penalty turned into the first of Barabucci's four goals. But off the very next move Marcos' effort ended near the goal mouth and young Humaid Al Draï, featuring in his first big match kept his nerves to score.

Immediately Marcos put together another run and his solo effort gave Ghantoot a 4-2 lead. The third chukka and the early part of the fourth was a very crucial period when Ghantoot came under pressure from Barabucci.

Barabucci missed after a good run, then made amends to score and reduce the margin to 3-4. Just before the third chukka ended, Barabucci charged down with a speedy run but undid his good work when his final push just missed the mark.

Barabucci was not to be denied and made it 4-4 on his second attempt off a 60-yard penalty. However, Azumendi ensured Ghantoot went into the final chukka with a 5-4 lead. The crowd was on their feet in the fifth

chukka when Barabucci managed to put the ball between the posts to make it 5-5. Another scorching run almost ended in the lead but Barabucci lost control at the all important end.

Marcos and Azumendi then combined and the former's final attempt was blocked in an illegal manner. The resultant spot on penalty from about six yards was given to young Humaid Al Draï, who made no mistake and put Ghantoot ahead 6-5. A second before the hooter Azumendi unleashed a fine run and Ghantoot put the issue beyond doubt with a classy goal.

"It was a very close match. I am happy we managed to pull it off. The whole team played well and it is good to be on the winning side," Marcos Heguy said later. "I am simply delighted. Thanks to Sheikh Falah bin Zayed Al Nahyan I am in the team and to score two goals is simply superb. I will remember this final for a long, long time," Humaid Al Draï said. "It was a tough match. We tried our best," said Barabucci.

"We were unlucky today, however, we are still very happy and satisfied with our performance. We started as underdogs but managed to reach the final. We will continue to play as K&K in these championships," said Khalfan Al Kaabi, captain of the K&K team.

Teams:

Ghantoot Al Basti: Marcos Heguy (10), Gonzalo Azumendi (6), **Dr. Amin Badr El Din** (0) and Humaid Al Draï (0).

K&K: Jose Araya (9), Hugo barabucci (8), Sheikh Khaled Al Qassimi (1) and Khalfan Al Kaabi (0).