

## **Turkmen National Champs still champs**

Turkmen beat Sky Soldiers 6-2

Sky soldiers tethered, 6-2

Story and photos by

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The first time in over a decade, a Turkmen soccer team was allowed to play in Kirkuk, Iraq. The Turkmen national champions played the Sky Soldiers, the 173d Airborne Brigade's soccer team June 5.

"This game is morale booster," said Sky Soldiers defender, Terrance Douse. "Since we can't play in United States Army European Championship, this is our championship."

The Turkmen national champions defeated 90 teams in the northern Iraq to gain the title.

"We never come to Kirkuk before," said Kahtan Wahby, goalie for the Turkmen. "The Saddam regime wouldn't let us play here. We're very happy to play the Americans."

The game started off with Col. William Mayville, 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigades Commander, winning the coin toss for the Sky Soldiers.

The Turkmen didn't waste any time scoring their first goal. Within the first minute of play Turkmen striker Mazen Widad scored with a hard kick that sent the ball sailing into the upper left corner of the goal.

Thirty seconds later Sky Soldiers striker Damel Fall, retaliated with a nice shot to the upper left corner that left Turkmen goalie Kahtan Wahby diving to left and coming up with empty.

After being slide tackled from behind Lauro Obeada, Sky Soldiers midfielder and coach, scored the Sky Soldier's second goal on a penalty kick giving the Sky Soldiers a 2-1 lead.

The lead lasted only 20 minutes and was the only lead the Sky Soldiers enjoyed for the game.

Turkmen striker Moustafa Kamil evened up the score 2-2 with a hard shot that sailed above the head of Sgt. Jody Volz, Sky Soldier's goalie.

Five minutes before the end of the first half Turkmen midfielder Adyn Mahmud gave Turkmen the lead with his first goal of the game.

The blow of the referee's whistle marked the start of the halftime show. 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division's band played for the crowd and covered popular songs by Sublime, and other artists.

Sky Soldiers second half wasn't as eventful as the first half.

Mahmud got a hat trick by scoring two more goals giving the Turkmen a 5-2 lead.

The last goal of the game was scored when Kamil scored with a line drive from 50 feet out. Giving the Turkmen a 6-2 lead they held to the end of the game.

Sky Soldiers lost the game, but not the battle.

"We're glad to be here and play," said Saygn Shwt, Turkmen's coach. "We want to play again."

The Turkmen will get that chance with Obeada promising Shwt after the game that the Sky Soldiers would come to their hometown and play.

Sky Soldiers have five more games scheduled and will be traveling to Erbil and Dibits to play other teams.

"I had a great time," said Sky Soldier midfielder Antonio Medina. "It will be a lot more fun when we go to their town and play. Hopefully next time will win."