

# DAILY NEWS

Saturday 22 Feb 2020

**ALKASS**<sup>®</sup>  
INTERNATIONAL CUP



# THE FAB FOUR

TITANIC TUSSELS AWAIT IN SUPER SEMIS



RANGERS  
FC

2/2  
(4) (3)



KASHIMA  
REYSOL



ASPIRE  
ACADEMY

4/2

FC ZENIT  
SAINT PETERSBURG



# QUARTET TO RISK IT ALL FOR FINAL BERTH

From 12 teams that began the 2020 Alkass International Cup, each harbouring hopes and dreams of lifting the prestigious piece of silverware, now just four are left. One of Inter Milan, Mohammed VI Academy, Paris Saint-Germain or Real Madrid will be the champions come Monday evening. But for now, they will have only one target – to ensure they reach Monday's showpiece and not fall at this final hurdle.

Here is a look at the two semi-finals, how the four teams reached this stage and the players who have caught the eye of those packing the Aspire Zone in Doha and watching on TV and online from all over the world.

In the first match, surprise package Mohammed VI Academy will face their toughest test of the tournament so far, when they go head-to-head with mighty Real Madrid. However, having seen off the challenge of holders Rangers in the quarter-finals on Wednesday evening, the Moroccans will certainly not be overawed by the size of the task in front of them.

That memorable 3-2 triumph over the Scottish outfit was sealed by a match-winning header from striker Omar Sadik seven minutes from time. The Academy captain is certainly one player Real will have to keep their eyes on, as that strike was one of four goals he has bagged in the tournament so far. Sadik first impressed in the group stages when his hat-trick, including one from the penalty spot, completed a 3-0 victory over Turkish side Altinordu FK. And, even in the 3-1 reverse to Inter Milan, the burly frontman left his mark on the Italian backline, even though he was often starved of service from the flanks.

Two other players have found the net for the Academy en route to the last-four - Hassan Aqboub, whose double helped in the defeat of Rangers and earned him the man-of-the-match honour, and midfielder Mohammed Jazouli. The latter, however, is suspended for the showdown with the Spaniards after being sent off late on in the clash with the Glaswegians.

As is often the case at Al Kass, the Moroccan outfit has grown into the tournament with each game. Real Madrid, on the other hand, have been nothing short of sensational from the first whistle. They were the only side to gain maximum points in the group stages with victories over FC Zenit (5-3) and Sporting Clube De Portugal (4-1). They then put Kashiwa Reysol to the sword in the last-eight, with an emphatic 7-0 thrashing on Thursday evening.

Goals have flowed across the team for Madrid, with no less than eight different marksmen sharing the 15 goals plundered so far (and they've also benefited from an own goal for good measure). Leading the way is David Pecellin with four goals, closely followed by Nico Paz with three. Abraham Marina has bagged a brace as has Yeray Perez. Also on the mark for Los Blancos have been Samuel Polo, Ekaitz Redondo Borrajo, Eric Alcon and Jaime Puertas. Playmaker Paz has caught the eye throughout, his keen eye for goal allied to a deft touch, providing a reliable supply line for the frontmen.

On balance, Madrid go into the clash as favourites, but the Mohammed VI Academy are certain to prove stubborn opponents. And, if they can get Sadik on the ball, they will fancy their chances.

The second semi-final pits two European giants against one another, with Inter Milan matching up against Paris Saint-Germain. It is perhaps true to say that the Italians have not been at their sparkling best during the tournament, but like all good sides have done enough when it matters, and find themselves in the last-four once more. The club is playing in its third Alkass International Cup, and on their other two appearances Inter have reached this stage of the competition. They will be determined to go one better this time round, but will have to be at their very best to dismantle a supremely talented PSG side.

Milan began the tournament well, seeing off fellow semi-finalists Mohammed VI Academy 3-1 in their first group encounter. Amadou Sarr's brace and one from teammate Tommaso Clerici helped defeat the North Africans. However, they were somewhat out of sorts in their second game, losing 1-0 to Altinordu FK, and only qualifying for the knockout stages in second place.

Inter, though, reverted to traditional Italian football type in their quarter-final encounter against hosts Aspire Academy, securing a narrow 1-0 victory. Keeping everything tight at the back, they had to wait until nine minutes from time for the all-important goal, Sarr's header proving the difference in the end. The big striker is certainly one of the players the PSG defence will have to watch out for.

For their part, Paris Saint-Germain have made it through to the semi-finals in excellent fashion, starting with an undefeated group campaign in which they first blanked Kashiwa Reysol 3-0 before sharing a 2-2 draw with FC Barcelona. They were then too powerful for FC Zenit, who they despatched 5-0 on Thursday afternoon in the last-eight.

Striker Ilyes Housni really made an impression in the quarter-final, firing home terrific treble to add to the goal he grabbed in the draw with Barcelona. Just one behind in the team's scoring charts is Ismael Gharbi, who has netted three times so far, with Yohan Tade, Enzo Tayamoutou and Wilson Odobert the other PSG players to register on the scoresheet.

A tight Italian rearguard up against a potent French attack are the tasty ingredients for what promises to be a memorable match to complete this year's Alkass International Cup semi-finals. This game looks too close to call, and might even be decided by a penalty shootout. A dramatic Saturday for the final four sides certainly awaits at the Aspire Zone.



# THE ONES TO WATCH

Al Kass analysts Chris Makin (CM) and Nick Summerbee (NS) discuss the most impressive talents on show in the semi-finals.

## PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN

**CM:** I really rate **Zaire Emery**. He's just about to turn 14, so he's playing a year or two below this level. His strength is amazing - he just mops up in front of the back four. His positional sense is incredible for someone at such a young age, and I've been really impressed by him.

**NS:** I would say he is possibly the biggest talent in this tournament. In terms of his physique, he reminds me of Paul McGrath, who was one of Man United and Ireland's best players in the 1980s. When you think of Emery's age, just coming up to 14, he's the one for me.

## INTER MILAN

**CM:** I'm going to go with **Alessandro Marocco**, the right back. I've been searching for a stand-out defender, and for me he's been one of the best I've watched in this

tournament. He plays at right-back, and likes to get forward, but it's his defensive assets which stood out for me really.

**NS:** I would say **Amadou Sarr**, the centre forward. His all-round game is strong. He scored in their first game, and he could be one of the players that fires Inter all the way. Sarr is the full package; he scores goals, has great support play, and he's good in the air as well.

## REAL MADRID

**CM:** I've got to go with **Nico Paz**, their number 10. He's got a wonderful left foot, and is a very gifted and creative player. Real are slightly different compared to previous years, because they have three quite big players in their frontline who can all score. But Nico Paz looks very silky on the ball, and from free-kicks he's deadly.

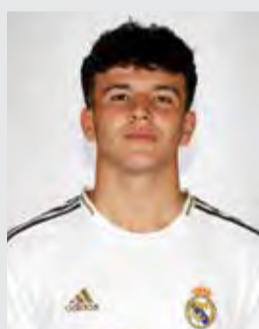
**NS:** I would agree with that, but **Abraham Marina** deserves a mention too. He's shown good form and scored a great long-range goal. It's between those two, but I'd probably

go for Paz. He broke his arm just before the tournament, so he'd only played one game, but he's one of those players who can win a game for you.

## MOHAMMED VI ACADEMY

**CM:** I would have said **Mohammed Jazouli**, but he is suspended because he got sent off against Rangers. He's a very strong midfielder, and if they get through he might come back for the final. He's very similar to Zaire Emery at PSG, playing just in front of the back four - he's strong, and his positional sense is good.

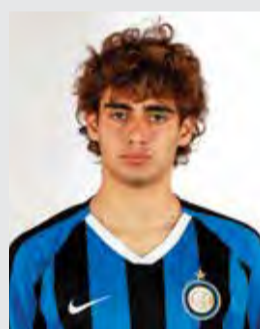
**NS:** **Omar Sadik** is a leader. The team works hard, but he's the one who leads as the captain. He is a real old-fashioned, aggressive target man who isn't afraid to put his head in where it hurts. He can score goals in and around the box and if his teammates can provide the crosses, he's good enough to beat Real Madrid, and he could fire them all the way.



ABRAHAM JOSÉ NOBREGA  
MARINA



NICOLÁS PAZ MARTÍNEZ



ALESSANDRO MAROCCI



AMADOU MAKHTARLAYI  
SARR



MOHAMMED YOUNES  
JAZOULI

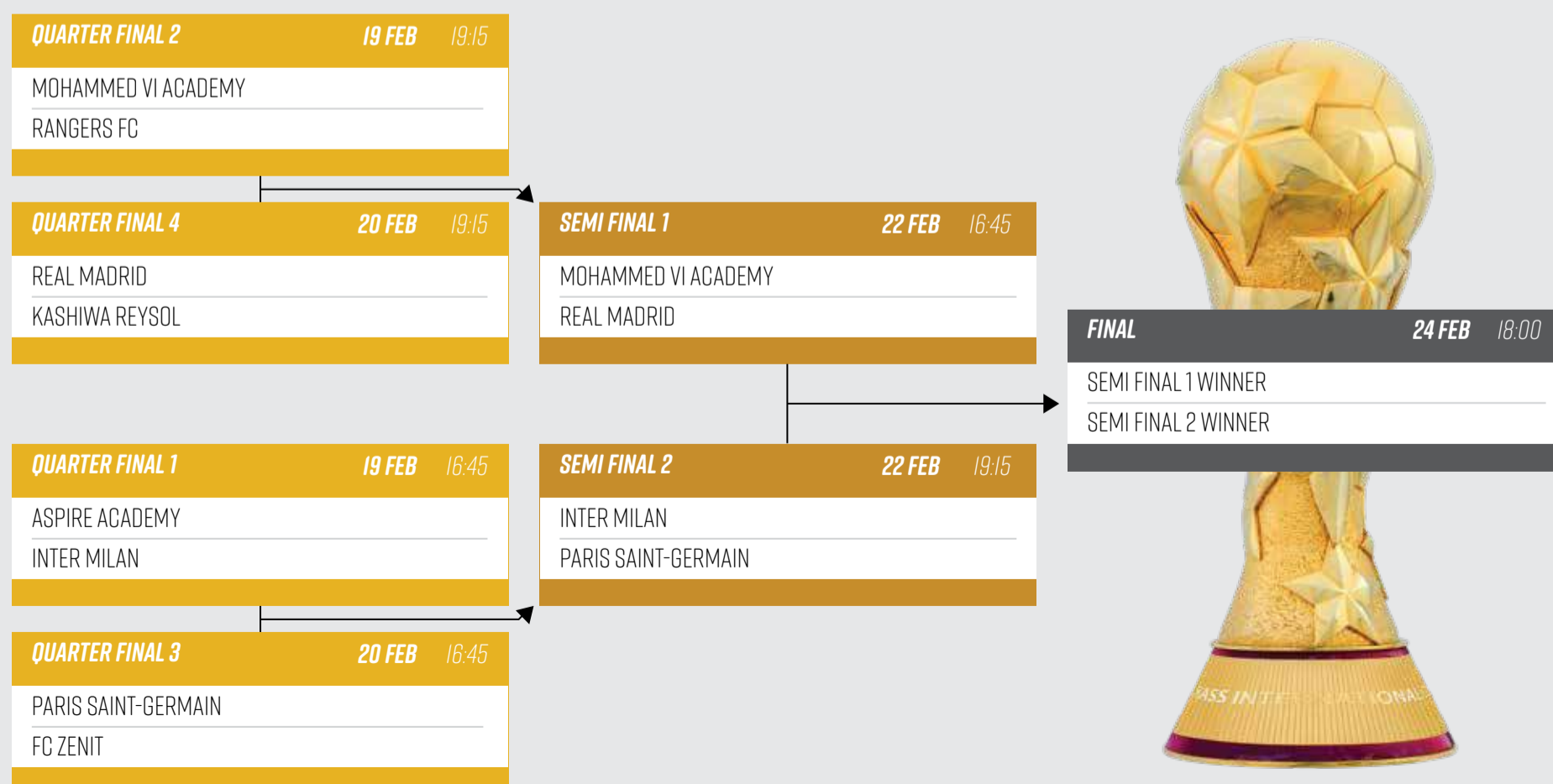


OMAR SADIK



WARREN ZAIRE-EMERY

## ROAD TO THE CUP



# RANGERS ARE SPOT ON AS THEY DEFEAT KASHIWA ON PENALTIES



Jack McConnell pulled off two dramatic saves as 2019 Al Kass International Cup champions Rangers edged out Kashiwa Reysol in a penalty shoot-out.

Bidding for a place in the fifth/sixth place play-off, Rangers won the penalty shoot-out 4-3 but they really should have clinched it in normal time. The Glasgow side were 2-0 up but were stunned when Kashiwa levelled with the last kick of the match.

Rangers took the lead on 24 minutes when Zak McKay hit the post and Leyton Dunlop had the easiest of tap-ins. They doubled their advantage on 42 minutes when McKay netted one of the most spectacular goals of the competition.

Toi Ohashi blocked Adedire Mebude's shot and the ball came out to McKay, who collected it on his chest before unleashing a stunning dipping half-volley from long range.

Kashiwa, the 2018 runners-up, pulled one back on 50 minutes when Connor Allan's poor pass was punished by Shoma Kurita who drove into the box and fired across Jack McConnell into the net.


The Japanese side then took the match to penalties with a 94th minute equaliser when Takumu Nakamura's shot was saved by McConnell but Kurita pounced to grab his second of the match.

Kurita and Kai Adachi missed during the shoot-out, as did Francis Jacobs for Rangers, but Kristian Webster clinched victory for the Scots.

Rangers skipper Charlie Lindsay, the leading scorer in the tournament with five goals, failed to add to his tally but did win the player of the match award for the third time in four matches.


## HOW THE PENALTY SHOOT-OUT WENT

RANGERS	KASHIWA
LINDSAY ✓	YAMAMOTO ✓
JACOBS ✗	KURITA ✗
GALLAGHER ✓	NAKAMURA ✓
URE ✓	ADACHI ✗
WEBSTER ✓	OTSUKI ✓



**2 (4)**  
RANGERS FC

X



**2 (3)**  
KASHIWA REYSOL



## RANGERS FC

GK Jack McConnell	MF Charlie Lindsay ©
MF Mackenzie Strachan	FW Adedire Mebude
DF Kelsey Ewen	DF Zak McKay
MF Connor Allan	DF Jake Wallace
FW Leyton Dunlop	MF Francis Jacobs
MF Darren McNally	



## KASHIWA REYSOL

GK Yota Yanagi	FW Isshin Takizawa
DF Go Otsuki ©	MF Tsubasa Ikebata
DF Yudai Matsumoto	MF Kaisei Oki
FW Shoma Kurita	FW Nobuhiro Konno
DF Toru Nishimura	DF Ayuto Date
DF Tiu Chashi	



### PLAYER OF THE MATCH

## Charlie Lindsay

“It was a good game. I think we played very well during the game, and when (it was time for penalties), we all did well (again). I’m pretty happy with the trophy but, as always, it’s a win for the team and that’s what matters. Thanks to the fans for supporting us (throughout). We come here every night and try to put a performance and play good football, and obviously, throughout the tournament we have. We haven’t yet reached our top level and we’re excited to try and push on the standards a bit more with our next game.”

”

## THE EXPERTS SAY...

### NICK SUMMERBEE

“It was a good game of football. Rangers had the better of it but should’ve taken advantage of their chances and finish the game off, which they didn’t. Kashiwa showed a lot of spirit to keep themselves in the game and to obviously get the goal at the end, right around the 90th minute. As a coach, you want (your players) to go through different experiences playing against other teams, but you possibly want penalties as well just to give them that little bit of a pressure just to see what it’s like. In the end, it was Rangers who get to play another day.”

“How you react is a big part of being a professional footballer. Only a small bit of it is success, the rest is injuries, not playing in the team, getting dropped, and you try and find your form. So, you have to be mentally strong.”

”

**RANGERS COACH**



**Brian Gilmour**

“

*I'm really proud of the performance tonight, the performance levels that we spoke about beforehand and the levels we reached in the game especially the first half were very good and very dominant, and the standard was terrific to see tonight. We are very comfortable and satisfied with the progress that has been made from top to bottom and we're very grateful for the support that we have had from fans from all over the world, this is a great experience for the young players as well.*

”

**KASHIWA REYSOL TEAM MANAGER**



**Takuya Odagiri**

“

*Our players' spirit was positive throughout the game. First half was difficult, but they were still in it. With the second half, they tried to do something that they wanted to do, and they scored that (94th minute) goal. The tournament has been very valuable in terms of being a platform for the players to improve, and in that sense, they got what they came here for.*

”

**FANS FROM THE PITCH**

**RANGERS FANS WHO WERE THERE TO CHEER ON ASPIRE ACADEMY:**

“

*Russell Quinn and Sam P. Baldowski: It must be hard for both teams at this stage, as they're not playing to advance in the competition. It's a good game so far. Aspire Academy are doing really well, and they deserve to win this match. We've been attending most matches in the tournament and we like to watch some good football.*

”

**RANGERS FC SUPPORTER AND MOTHER OF FRANCIS JACOBS**

“

*Cindy Jacobs, We didn't see it coming on Rangers' last game, and there were a few chances they could've taken advantage of (to change the result). It still matters what position they land in the tournament. For Rangers, every game is another chance to win.*

”

**MARK HATELEY: FORMER RANGERS AND ENGLAND STRIKER**

“

*The tournament as usual goes very well, the benefits to the boys are fantastic, as a competition where the best is coming against the best, I think at this level it's very important that we are all competing against the best at this age, because it gives the young players a realization for where they need to be, so this is an ideal situation for us to be playing in. I'm obviously disappointed this year because we haven't won the tournament like last year but this year is a younger group.*

*Our older group that won last year couldn't have come back this year, but it's a new experience for these boys, they are taking it in its stride, we have lost one match so hopefully we win today and we win the last game so we leave the tournament in a good position and everybody with a good positive experience.*

”



Mark Hateley receives a commemorative plaque on behalf of Rangers FC



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# SKILLFUL SURAG STARS AS ASPIRE ACADEMY HOLD OFF ZENIT



Hosts Aspire Academy will face Glasgow Rangers to decide fifth place in the Al Kass International Cup after overcoming a determined challenge from FC Zenit.

Aspire, beaten by Inter Milan in the quarter-finals, stormed into a 2-0 lead inside 10 minutes, but were pegged back to 2-2 before sealing victory with two late goals.

Player of the Match Mohamed Surag was heavily involved for Aspire and crossed for Yousef Elkhatib to score after just four minutes. Six minutes later, Surag was brought down by Iuri Koledin and picked himself up to score from the spot.

Surag was a constant threat to the Zenit defence and the way he frequently ran at players was in the mould of current Asian

player of the year Akram Afif, who played for Aspire at the 2013 edition of Al Kass Cup before going on to win the Asian Cup with Qatar in 2019.

Zenit pulled one back on 61 minutes when Akim Belokhonov fired in a powerful left-foot free-kick and Igor Kozlov equalised on 10 minutes later when tucking his shot beyond Amir Katoul.

In between the Zenit goals, Surag rounded the keeper only for Evgenii Tonetvitskii to head his shot off the line.

Aspire went back in front with a rather fortunate goal on 77 minutes when Surag found Mobark Hamza and Koledin challenged only for the ball to hit Hamza's shin before going in.

Jassem Alsharshani sealed victory with a superb curling shot in the 89th minute. Zenit, who have conceded at least four goals in every match, will take on Kashiwa Reysol for seventh place.

**ASPIRE ACADEMY** **X** **ZENIT 1925**

**4** **2**

**ASPIRE ACADEMY** **FC ZENIT**





## ASPIRE ACADEMY

GK Amir Katoul	FW Mohammed Al-Quraishi
DF Chalpan Abdulnasir	FW Mohammed Surag
DF Saif Fadlalla	DF Yousef Elkhatib
DF Mohammed Ali ©	MF Abdulaziz Al-Naimi
MF Motafa Abouelela	MF Talal Al Shaaibi
MF Jassem Alsharshani	

ASPIRE TODAY. INSPIRE TOMORROW



## FC ZENIT

GK Vladislav Putilov	MF Ilia Rodionov
DF Iuri Koledin	DF Pavel Kulakov
DF Ilia Kirsh ©	MF Evgenii Oshennikov
MF Nikita Vershinin	MF Nikita Shershov
FW Aleksei Filimonov	DF Evgenii Tonetvitskii
FW Akim Belokhonov	



### PLAYER OF THE MATCH

## Mohamed Surag

“

The trophy isn't for me but for the entire team. We successfully put the Coach's plan into play and were eleven men standing tall on the pitch. We couldn't get to the semifinals, but we're pleased with how things went. We're not yet done with the competition, and we'll hopefully claim the fifth position.

”

## THE EXPERTS SAY...

### RHODRI WILLIAMS

“

Aspire looked pretty comfortable but Zenit St Petersburg had that fight (in them) and they actually had a couple of chances. Aspire Academy is definitely a good team.

#### On the semifinals

“We've got the semifinals tomorrow. I think Real Madrid are not going to have it all their own way against Mohammed VI Academy. They'll mark Real Madrid really tight and put a lot of pressure on them, and even the best players in the world, once you put them under pressure, they find life difficult. As for PSG and Inter Milan, both sides have got the best defenses in this tournament so far. I've fancied PSG right from the get-go though, and I think they'll go all the way. But it's football – anything can happen.

”



**ASPIRE**  
ACADEMY

**ASPIRE ACADEMY HEAD COACH**

**Lucas Nardi**

“

*We started the game in a very good way, but Zenit FC team started to push forward , we couldn't stop them, then it was a draw. What was important is that the team gained strength again and started to press harder. In my point of view, this has been a great tournament for the Aspire Academy team and we're happy with the performance.*

”

**TOP SCORERS**



**CHARLIE LINDSAY**  
RANGERS FC

**5** GOALS



**DAVID PECELLÍN GARCIA**  
REAL MADRID

**4** GOALS



**OMAR SADIK**  
MOHAMMED VI ACADEMY

**4** GOALS



**ILYES HOUSNI**  
PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN

**4** GOALS



[info@qataridiar.com](mailto:info@qataridiar.com)  
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# GAMES SCHEDULES

## GROUP STAGE

GROUP A	GROUP B	GROUP C	GROUP D
 <b>Aspire Academy</b>	 <b>Paris Saint-Germain FC</b>	 <b>FC Internazionale Milano</b>	 <b>Real Madrid CF</b>
 <b>Rangers FC</b>	 <b>FC Barcelona</b>	 <b>Altinordu FK</b>	 <b>FC Zenit Saint Petersburg</b>
 <b>Suwon Samsung</b>	 <b>Kashiwa Reysol</b>	 <b>Mohammed VI Football Academy</b>	 <b>Sporting Clube de Portugal</b>

DATE	NO.	TEAMS	SCORE	TIME	VENUE
Thu 13.02.	1	Paris Saint-Germain	3-0	16:45	5
	2	Aspire Academy	3-1	19:00	5
Fri 14.02.	3	Inter Milan	3-1	16:45	4
	4	FC Zenit	3-5	19:00	4
Sat 15.02.	5	Suwon Samsung	2-3	16:45	5
	6	Kashiwa Reysol	2-1	19:00	5
Sun 16.02.	7	Altinordu FK	0-3	16:45	4
	8	Real Madrid	4-1	19:00	4
Mon 17.02.	9	Aspire Academy	4-4	16:45	5
	10	Paris Saint-Germain	2-2	19:00	5
Tue 18.02.	11	Inter Milan	0-1	16:45	4
	12	Sporting Clube de Portugal	4-4	19:00	4
<b>POSITION 9 - 12</b>					
Wed 19.02.	13	FC Barcelona	4-0	16:45	5
	14	Suwon Samsung	0-1	19:15	5
<b>QUARTER FINALS</b>					
Wed 19.02.	15	Aspire Academy	0-1	16:45	4
	16	Mohammed VI Academy	3-2	19:15	4
Thu 20.02.	17	Paris Saint-Germain	5-0	16:45	5
	18	Real Madrid	7-0	19:15	5
<b>PLAY OFFS POSITION 5 - 8</b>					
Fri 21.02.	19	Rangers FC	2(4)-2(3)	16:45	4
	20	Aspire Academy	4-2	19:15	4
<b>SEMI FINALS</b>					
Sat 22.02.	21	Mohammed VI Academy	VS	16:45	5
	22	Inter Milan	VS	19:15	5
<b>PLAY OFFS POSITION 5 - 8</b>					
Sun 23.02.	23	Kashiwa Reysol	VS	16:45	4
	24	Rangers FC	VS	19:15	4
<b>POSITION 3 - 4 &amp; FINAL</b>					
Mon 24.02.	25	Losers Game No. 21	VS	15:30	5
	26	Winners Game No. 21	VS	18:00	5

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