

DAILY NEWS

Monday 24 Feb 2020

ALKASS[®]
INTERNATIONAL CUP



WHO WILL CLAIM



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2020

VISION



ONE GAME AWAY FROM GLORY



Eleven days have passed since the opening game of the 2020 Alkass International Cup, between Paris Saint-Germain and Kashiwa Reysol. Since then, the tournament has witnessed countless moments of drama; a series of seismic shocks; the taste of triumph; the dashed hopes of defeat; 25 thrilling matches; 12 teams giving their all.

And now there are two.

Now, only Inter Milan and Real Madrid are left to battle it out for the prestigious youth football trophy. It has been some journey for both under-16s sides to reach the final – and there is no doubt that each will be as determined as the other to lift the trophy at Aspire Academy in Doha on Monday evening.

As one of only five clubs to have won the trophy, and with an unmatched reputation at senior level, Madrid came into this tournament as one of the favourites. And, from the first whistle they were mightily impressive. Kicking off against Zenit Saint Petersburg, the young Spaniards came out on top after a free-flowing, wildly fluctuating game that ended 5-3. Attacking midfielder Nico Paz announced himself in style, with a man-of-the-match performance capped by two goals.

A straightforward 4-1 defeat of Sporting Clube de Portugal followed, after which Real striker David Garcia declared: "We came here to win. We came here to fight for the tournament. And that's what we're going to do."

Their quarter-final tie against Kashiwa Reysol proved to be something of a mismatch, with a 7-0 demolition - the highest score of the tournament - demonstrating the gulf in class

between the two sides. By now, Los Blancos had plundered 16 goals as the competition's leading scorers, and looked certain to progress to the final with a minimum of fuss. However, the youngsters of Mohammed VI Academy had other ideas, and pushed the Spaniards all the way to penalties, after the semi-final had finished 1-1 in normal time. Real's accomplished players held their nerve, and will now believe that they can go all the way in Doha.

However, the same can be said of a muscular Inter Milan side, who appear to be peaking at just the right time. Their first game at Al Kass was an unremarkable 3-1 victory over Mohammed VI. It is only in hindsight that the result looks impressive, because at the time it was assumed that the young Moroccans would be the tournament's whipping boys. Their subsequent progress showed they were anything but, and placed Milan's win in its proper context.

Inter faltered in their second group game, falling to a 1-0 reverse against Altinordu. Once again, however, the result disguised the real story, as the Milanese – already almost certain to progress – made nine changes and generally took their foot of the gas.

But they certainly stepped up a gear in the knockout phase of the tournament. Having absorbed incessant pressure from Aspire Academy in the early stages of their quarter-final, the Italians waited for their chance to arrive, and when it did they showed no mercy. With just nine minutes of the game remaining, dangerman Amadou Sarr climbed highest to head the ball home and secure a 1-0 victory.

The Milanese were similarly streetwise in their semi against Paris Saint-Germain – a

match they were widely expected to lose. The Italians, under head coach Gabriele Bonaccina, showed their steely determination after going an early goal down to the French outfit, levelling midway through the first half and then netting two decisive goals after the break.

Inter will be hoping to make history tonight, as no Italian team has won the trophy in the previous eight competitions. On two occasions, a club from their homeland has lost in the final – Juventus against Paris Saint-Germain in the first tournament back in 2012, and AS Roma, who fell to Rangers FC just 12 months ago. Coincidentally, both of those finals were decided by a penalty shootout. Inter were third in 2016, following a fourth-placed finish three years earlier.

Striker Sarr is certainly one player the Spaniards will have to keep a close eye on. The Inter forward has netted four times so far in the competition, including the match-winner in the quarter-finals and the equaliser in the last-four.

And, with just three goals conceded in their four matches to reach the final - one of those a penalty - Inter's defence is the best in the competition, and Madrid will have to work very hard to find any weaknesses in it. On the other hand, Real's free-scoring frontline will be difficult to stop. Garcia with four goals and Paz with three are Madrid's leading scorers, and Inter's rear guard will have to watch out for what they might produce.

A mouth-watering match-up awaits.

KHALED TALEB, MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE FOR SELECTING MVPS IN THE TOURNAMENT



Al Kass International Cup brings together not only the best young players from all over the world, but it calls upon some of the top administrators from Qatar to ensure the high international standards are upheld. One example of this is the work carried out by a committee set up to select players and teams for the various awards on offer. Daily News caught up with Khaled Taleb, member of the committee responsible for selecting MVPs in the tournament and he shared on the committee's work.

"Usually people think that a player who scores (the most) goals becomes the most outstanding. That's not how this works. Maybe a player pulling off a hat-trick makes himself an obvious choice (for the MVP award), but there are specific criteria that ensure fairness

(in selecting the awardee). In a nutshell, the best performer – whether the one having the biggest impact on his team's win or saving his team from a heavy loss – gets it.

"There are also different criteria for different roles. For example, for goalkeepers, it's about things like how they handle the ball, what they do when they're up against a solo run or a strong shot, and whether they went out of their own way to help the team.

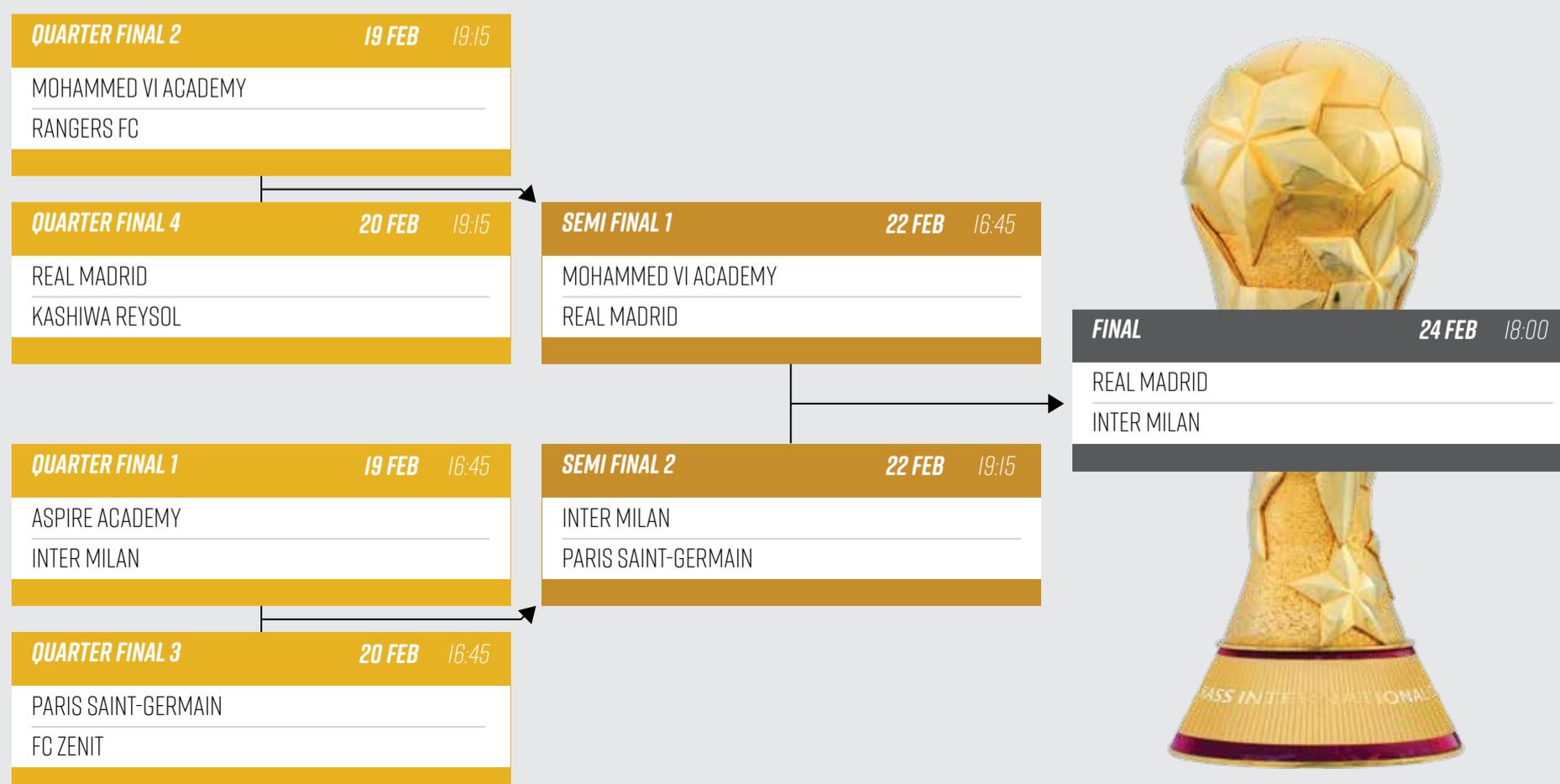
As for defense, we look for things like intercepting shots and blocking goal-kicks. Even for offense positions, not all goals are created equal; an easy score doesn't get the same points as a well-executed one. The player(s) who assisted the scorer also get points for their contribution."

"In all, we have plenty of criteria to consider in order to make sure that the 'MVP' is a fair and well-earned trophy."

"It's also important to note that the committee's members are highly qualified for the role and have a rich history of practical experience behind them."

"What's interesting about this year's tournament is that there are plenty of takers for the win, as many teams and players are bringing their A-game and the margins look pretty close. This makes things pretty exciting for us as a committee, although daunting, as we still don't know who's going to be the tournament's MVP." Concluded Khaled Taleb, member of the MVP selection at 2020 Al Kass International Cup

ROAD TO THE CUP



ZENIT SIGN OFF IN STYLE AS THEY HAMMER SEVEN PAST KASHIWA



FC Zenit made light work of defeating Kashiwa Reysol thanks to a hat-trick by Igor Kozlov who moved to the top of the Al Kass International Cup goalscoring charts.

Kozlov took his tally to six goals as Zenit won this seventh/eighth place play-off at Aspire, his first coming inside two minutes when sidefooting home Kirill Stolbov's cross.

Zenit doubled their advantage on seven minutes and again it was Kozlov who found the net. Player of the Match Evgenii Pshennikov provided a quality cross but Takumi Itoh should have kept out Kozlov's angled drive.

Zenit added a third in the final minute of the half when Kozlov beat Isshin Takizawa and crossed for Evgenii Tonevitskii to send a perfectly placed header inside the post.

Kovlov completed his hat-trick and became the leading scorer in the tournament on 53 minutes. Nikita Luzan's cross was flicked on by Belokhonov and Kozlov stooped to head home. That was one of his last touches of the competition as he was taken off minutes later, much to the relief of the tiring Kashiwa defence.

The Japanese side did grab a consolation goal on 72 minutes when skillful midfielder Takamu Nakamura found Ota Yamamoto whose shot went in off the post.

Zenit responded by scoring twice in the space of five minutes, Nikita Vershinin firing in off the bar on 75 minutes and Pshennikov making it 6-1 two minutes later.

There was still time for a last-minute goal from Belokhonov who netted from close range after a fine cross by Luzan. It was the second time in the tournament that Kashiwa had conceded seven goals, having lost 7-0 to Real Madrid in the quarter-finals.

1
KASHIWA REYSOL

X

7
FC ZENIT



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	



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

Evgenii Pshennikov

“ Even though I’m happy with the trophy, I honestly think Igor Kozlov (Player #11) should be getting this title. Overall, this has been a good tournament with many strong teams like Real Madrid, Sporting CP, and others. It’s been a great experience to play against them, as we don’t get such an opportunity in our hometown.

”

THE EXPERTS SAY...

RHODRI WILLIAMS

“ FC Zenit wanted to prove something. They’ve been a good team in this tournament and have conceded too many goals. They also have that Russian fight about them. Kashiwa Reysol were out on their feet. Being one year younger (than last year), I thought they are smaller in stature, while some of the other teams were much bigger physically and had more presence on the field. So I always felt they struggled.

However, they beat Barcelona and they did keep on fighting in this game and got the one goal back, but in the end, Zenit really wanted to prove something because they know that Spartak Moscow did quite well here in last year’s tournament, and so they had that Russian pride thing.

”

KASHIWA REYSOL HEAD COACH



Shunta Nagai

“

It was a very difficult game and we couldn't fight against Zenit. But we're going to take everything we learned from this tournament and make use of it with our team's players in the future.

”

FC ZENIT HEAD COACH



Dimitrii Poliakov

“

Today's match score was very comfortable - I would like to also thank the team of Japan for playing very good football. Even though they lost today, they are an extremely strong team, and that was a good learning game for us. We learned a lot during our time here in Doha, for me personally this is the best organized tournament we have been to and for the players they absolutely learned a lot. We were not too bad in attack but we performed poorly in our defense and this will be a point to improve when we head back home.

”

FANS FROM THE PITCH





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LINDSAY STARS AGAIN AS RANGERS GET THE BETTER OF ASPIRE



Glasgow Rangers secured fifth place in the Al Kass International Cup with a hard-earned victory over hosts Aspire Academy.

The two teams had drawn 4-4 during the group stages and were again among the goals as the tournament tally reached 109, two more than the previous record set in 2014.

Rangers went ahead on the half-hour mark when Jack Harkness did well to win a header on the halfway line and found Robbie Ure, who fired home.

The Rangers skipper grabbed his second on 36 minutes when getting on the end of Leyton Dunlop's quality pass and he should have completed his hat-trick in the final

minute of the half. Harkness broke down the right and set up Ure who hit the bar from close range.

Aspire reduced the arrears on 50 minutes when Al-Quraishi won and converted a penalty. The striker was clipped on the ankle by Kelsey Ewen and fired home the penalty, and just six minutes later Aspire were level when Abdulaziz Al-Naimi tapped home from close range after a fine cross from Talal Al Shaabi.

Rangers went back in front on 61 minutes when Icelandic youngster Johannes Bjarnason, back following suspension, finished off a great team move involving Francis Jacobs, Ure and Charlie Lindsay.

Aspire skipper Mohamed Surag showed great skill before hitting the bar in the final 10 minutes but Rangers made sure of victory on 89 minutes when Lindsay got on the end of a great pass by Connor Allan.

The goal makes him the joint top scorer with Igor Kozlov of FC Zenit with six goals and also helped to earn his fourth man of the match award of the tournament.



RANGERS

GK Jack McConnell	FW Robbie Ure ©
DF Jack Harkness	MF Charlie Lindsay
MF Mackenzie Strachan	DF Zak McKay
DF Kelsey Ewen	MF Johannes Bjarnason
MF Connor Allan	MF Francis Jacobs
FW Leyton Dunlop	



ASPIRE ACADEMY

GK Abdalla Abraham	DF Yousef Elkhatib
DF Chaplan Abdulnasir	MF Abdulaziz Al-Naimi
DF Saif Fadalla	DF Yousif Elnoiri
MF Mobark Hamza	MF Talal Al Shaaibi
FW Mohammed Al-Quraishi	MF Abdulrahman Al-Naimi
FW Mohamed Surag ©	



PLAYER OF THE MATCH

Charlie Lindsay

“ Obviously gratefully to get the fourth trophy as MVP but it's a team game and the team pressed hard to get the win. From traveling abroad we experience playing against different styles and levels of teams, different ways to play and strategies and we learn from every match. Thanks for all the supporters for being there for us we're very grateful for that.

”

THE EXPERTS SAY...

RHODRI WILLIAMS

“ Amazing game – slightly suspect defenses, which we've seen this year more than the last. Maybe, that's because they're a year younger, or maybe defending is going out of the game. When you talk to Chris, who was a defender himself, he talks about (how) the art of defending is going and these days it's all about pushing forward. You can always argue that if you got possession of the ball, why would you need to defend.

But we saw Rangers take a two-goal lead and they probably thought they 'got this in the bag', but Aspire Academy came out and they just attacked. It came back to 2-2, and then boom, Rangers attacked. Charlie Lindsay got a fantastic goal and they picked up their fifth spot. Lindsay is being the player of the tournament so far.

”

RANGERS FC HEAD COACH



Brian Gilmour

“

We're very happy with the performance of the players. It's been a long tournament in terms of physical stress, but that's why we're here. We played against Aspire Academy (twice) and I thought they were fantastic. We're really proud of our players and they've gotten stronger as the tournament went on and learned so much in a short time.

On Aspire Academy:

They've got an emphasis on trusting and investing in people. We've met with a lot of good people from the Academy over the last two weeks and shared a lot of good ideas. So, I don't think it can be anything but positive moving forward for the Academy and its future.

”

ASPIRE ACADEMY COACH



ASPIRE ACADEMY

Abdulrazak Hedider

“

This tournament was a fantastic experience for the players, it has been a very competitive tournament from the first day, competing against the best in the world and our players showed that they are on a very good way to progress and they show great potential for the future. It has been a good learning process for our players to grow. Today's game was good, the first half time we were down to zero, we created good chances and in the second half time we showed good reaction so I'm very proud of the team for the way they sacrificed on the field and this is what we want to archive and produce competitive players for the future and for the Qatar National team

”



TOP SCORERS



CHARLIE LINDSAY
RANGERS FC

6 GOALS



IGOR KOZLOV
FC ZENIT

6 GOALS



DAVID PECELLÍN
GARCIA
REAL MADRID

4 GOALS



OMAR SADIK
MOHAMMED VI ACADEMY

4 GOALS



ILYES HOUSNI
PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN

4 GOALS



ISMAEL GHARBI
PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN

4 GOALS

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2020



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GAMES SCHEDULES

GROUP STAGE

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

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
POSITION 9 - 12					
Wed 19.02.	13	FC Barcelona	4-0	16:45	5
	14	Suwon Samsung	0-1	19:15	5
QUARTER FINALS					
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
PLAY OFFS POSITION 5 - 8					
Fri 21.02.	19	Rangers FC	2(4)-2(3)	16:45	4
	20	Aspire Academy	4-2	19:15	4
SEMI FINALS					
Sat 22.02.	21	Mohammed VI Academy	1(3)-1(5)	16:45	5
	22	Inter Milan	3-1	19:15	5
PLAY OFFS POSITION 5 - 8					
Sun 23.02.	23	Kashiwa Reysol	1-7	16:45	4
	24	Rangers FC	4-2	19:15	4
POSITION 3 - 4 & FINAL					
Mon 24.02.	25	Mohammed VI Academy	VS	15:30	5
	26	Real Madrid	VS	18:00	5

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