

**ALKASS**  
INTERNATIONAL CUP



# DAILY NEWS

Saturday 27 Jan 2018



# VVS

# BATTLE 4 THE SEMI FINALS

BENFICA 6-0 AC MILAN  
ESPÉRANCE 1-0 ASPIRE ACADEMY



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# BENFICA AND ESPÉRANCE PUNCH SEMIFINAL TICKETS

*ONE OF EUROPE'S MOST STORIED CLUBS JOINED ONE OF AFRICA'S TOP SIDES IN THE 2018 AL KASS INTERNATIONAL CUP SEMIFINALS AS BENFICA AND ESPÉRANCE DE TUNIS WON THEIR QUARTERFINAL MATCHES YESTERDAY. THE REMAINING TWO SEMIFINALISTS WILL BE DETERMINED TODAY.*

The opening match saw Benfica continue its dominating play, this time against AC Milan. The Portuguese, who notched 11 goals in their two group-stage matches, wasted no time staking their lead. Just one minute in, Gonçalo De Oliveira slotted home a cross from the left side, giving Benfica the advantage before many fans had even found their seats. Gonçalo Ramos added his tournament-leading fourth goal on 23 minutes and a fifth just before the half, giving Benfica a comfortable 3-0 lead at the break.

Benfica coach Renato Paiva subbed out some of his stars in anticipation of a semifinal berth, but his side didn't miss a beat in the second half. Tiago Gouveia, coming off the bench, added two goals of his own within 15 minutes of stepping onto the pitch. In the 74th minute, Joao Ferreira made it 6-0 with a first-time blast past Milan goalkeeper Niccolò Zanellato.

Benfica will play the winner of today's Real Madrid-Kashiwa Reysol match in the semifinals. Milan still have fifth place to fight for, and will play either Paris Saint-Germain or Aspire Football Dreams tomorrow. Host Aspire Academy squared off against Espérance in the nightcap, hoping to capture more of the magic that saw them qualify in the waning seconds of their second group game. It was not to be, however, as the Tunisians won the rough-and-tumble match, 1-0.



Espérance has yet to concede a goal at this year's tournament, and Aspire spent much of the match beating their heads against the Tunisian wall. For their part, Espérance's lone goal came from the penalty spot. On the 30-minute mark, Aspire's Faisal Azadi took down Mobtassar Triki in the area, and Zied Berrima sent keeper Mahmoud Abunada the wrong way to put Esperance in front.

Aspire had a golden opportunity to equalize at the one-hour mark, when Mekki Tombari got free down the left and found Ahmed Alganehi, with an open net. His soft shot was saved by a Tunisian defender, however, and the hosts were still chasing a goal. Tunisian keeper Fares Jebali was kept busy as Aspire pressed, ably saving a dangerous free kick from Abdulla Al-Ali in added time.

Espérance will play the winner of the quarterfinal between Paris Saint-Germain and Aspire Football Dreams. Although Aspire Academy, won't repeat its run to the final, they'll fight for fifth, and play again tomorrow.

Today's quarterfinals begin with defending champions Real Madrid taking on Kashiwa Reysol at 3:30 pm, followed by Paris Saint-Germain and Aspire Football Dreams at 5:55 pm.



# JUBILANT FANS FLOCK TO ASPIRE ZONE FOR QUARTER FINALS

JUBILANT FANS FILLED THE STANDS AT ASPIRE ZONE AS THE QUARTERFINALS OF THE AL KASS INTERNATIONAL CUP GOT UNDERWAY YESTERDAY. THE DAY SAW PHENOMENAL PERFORMANCES BY BENFICA AND ESPÉRANCE DE TUNIS, WHO BOTH MADE IT THROUGH TO THE SEMIFINALS.

The Tunisian side, as usual, had a rowdy contingent of supporters, including Sabri.

*“I’ve been coming to Al Kass for the past three years, and each year is better than the last,” he said. “This tournament is great for Qatar as it gives them international visibility and demonstrates their capability of hosting the 2022 World Cup.”*

Tunisian Real Madrid fan Seqeeq was also enthusiastic, saying,

*“This is the third match of the tournament I’ve watched so far. Al Kass is important for young players, particularly the Arab teams, as they have the chance to play against some of the top European teams, which enables them to improve their skills tremendously.”*



## AN ITALIAN LEGEND SPEAKS

THE ITALIAN ALESSANDRO ALTABELLI PLAYED 17 YEARS OF PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL, MOST NOTABLY AT INTER MILAN, WHERE HE SCORED 128 GOALS AND LED THE TEAM TO TWO COPPA ITALIA TITLES. HE ALSO SCORED A GOAL IN THE 1982 FIFA WORLD CUP, WHICH ITALY WON. ALTABELLI ATTENDED THIS YEAR'S AL KASS INTERNATIONAL CUP AND GAVE HIS THOUGHTS.

**As a World Cup winner yourself, is there anybody here that you can pick out as a possible future World Cup winner?**

This tournament is a very high level tournament to play in. And you see many players from the past who are already playing in some national teams, like [Patrick] Cutrone. Today, especially from Benfica, there are some very good players. There are three or four of them that will play for sure in Benfica's first team, and also for the national team, because they are very good.

**What do you think of the Al Kass Tournament?**

This is the fifth year I have followed this tournament, because I love watching the junior players. The standard is very high. It gives players the chance to battle with other good players of their age and to compete against strong teams throughout the world.

## YESTERDAY'S STARS

**Match 1**

**Tiago Araujo,  
Benfica**

**Led six-goal attack in win over AC  
Milan**



**Match 2**

**Zied Berrima,  
Espérance de Tunis**

**Only goal in 1-0 win over Aspire  
Academy**



# BENFICA BLAST SIX IN MILANESE MAULING

Two of world football's most illustrious names fought out an engrossing last eight encounter on Friday afternoon, with Benfica cruising to a 6-0 victory against AC Milan.

The Italians could consider themselves slightly fortunate to have made the quarter-finals in the first place, having scraped a 1-0 win over Wydad before succumbing to Esperance Tunis, failing to impress in a 2-0 defeat.

In contrast, Benfica had already piled up the accolades in blazing a trail to the quarters, amassing 11 goals as the tournament's highest scoring team and, in Goncalo Ramos, boasting the joint-highest individual goalscorer coming into this game. He would lead the charts by some distance by the time this match was over.

Hugo Nunes had scored one of the greatest goals in Al Kass history – a magnificent solo effort in the Portuguese' opening 4-0 stroll against Guangzhou Evergrande and, in Jair Tavares, they possessed one of the most exciting wingers on show at the Aspire Zone.

In addition, the boys from Benfica had conjured the greatest comeback in the tournament's history in their previous game, against Aspire Academy, recovering from two down at half time to romp home by seven goals to three, helping themselves to five goals in 16 exhilarating minutes.

No surprise, then, that Benfica came into this game as hot favourites to reach the semi-finals, and they instantly justified the hype, taking the lead with the game just a minute old. Goncalo De Oliveira got on the end of a cross from the left and his mishit first-time shot looped in, despite the best efforts of Milan full back Gabriele Basani to keep the ball from crossing the line.

The Italians were scarcely able to escape from their own half until the 14th minute, when Daniel Maldini - the latest product of one of football's most famous families - was put clear eight yards from goal, only for keeper Samuel Soares to get an outstretched right boot to the ball and keep the striker's well-struck shot out.

Two minutes later Tavares went close for Benfica, cutting in from the left before exchanging quick passes and hammering in a low, long-range effort that Milan keeper Niccolo Zanellato dealt with comfortably.

He was left looking distinctly uncomfortable 23 minutes in, however, when Tavares again picked the ball up - this time 30 yards from goal in a central position - and supplied Ramos, five yards to his right. The fabulous forward took a couple of touches before firing a firm shot into the bottom left corner, past the despairing dive of Zanellato. It was the striker's fourth goal in three games, making him the tournament's top scorer.

Benfica were easily the better side by now but, seven minutes before half time, Milan's Giacomo Olzer very nearly reduced the deficit when he curled a magnificent long-range effort from the right of the area which ricocheted off the bar, with Soares beaten. It was the best attempt that the Milanese could muster in the first half, which drew to a close with Benfica adding a third – and a second for Ramos – when the prolific striker met a cross from the right with a deadly first-time strike that left Zanellato with no chance.

With Benfica now strolling towards victory, captain Alexandre Correia, Ramos and Tavares were withdrawn at half-time, to preserve energy for what was by now an inevitable semi-final appearance, with Rafael De Brito, Ronaldo Camara and Tiago Gouveia replacing them.



The triple substitution did nothing to disrupt the Portuguese side's rhythm, and they were four goals to the good within three minutes of the restart. There seemed little danger when Zanellato came out of his area to collect a bouncing ball, but Gouveia advanced and got the first touch before slotting into an empty goal.

Just ahead of the hour mark, it was five nil, with Gouveia notching his second in less than 15 minutes. The jet-heeled winger outran the Milan backline down the inside right channel, advancing into the area and lashing a powerful finish into the bottom left corner.

And, on 74 minutes, right back Joao Ferrera made it six, blasting an unstoppable first-time drive that, once again, powered into the bottom left corner past the despairing dive of Zanellato.

With the game now over as a contest, the pace slowed, with Benfica certain of progress and Milan resigned to their fate. The young Italians still have fifth place to play for, and will undoubtedly be enriched by their experience at Al Kass. For the Portuguese pacesetters, meanwhile, the sky is the limit.

<b>MATCH SCORE</b>		X	
	6		0
	BENFICA		AC MILAN

## BENFICA



12	Samuel Soares	GK
3	Alexandre Correia (Cap.)	DF
4	Francisco De Morais	DF
6	Henrique Jocu	MF
7	Tiago Araujo	FW
8	Gonçalo Ramos	MF
11	Jair Tavares	FW
14	Tomas Tavares	DF
15	Bernardo Da Silva	DF
18	Hugo Nunes	FW
20	Gonçalo De Oliveria	FW



## AC MILAN



1	Niccolo' Zanellato	GK
2	Alberto Barazzetta	DF
3	Gabriele Basani	DF
7	Alessandro Sala	MF
8	Marco Romano Frigerio	MF
10	Daniel Maldini	FW
11	Siaka Haidara	FW
13	Riccardo Martimbianco (Cap.)	DF
14	Giacomo Olzer	MF
15	Andrea Porrini	MF
20	Tommaso Merletti	



**Tiago Araujo, Benfica**  
MVP of the Match



*"It was a tough game, but we managed to turn the game around and put on a good performance. We are really happy to have made it through to the semi-finals, but we know that the next game is going to be challenging."*

**Alexandre Correia,**  
Benfica



*"From watching Benfica play, we knew they were a far superior team and we would struggle to win this game. Congratulations to them; it was a well-deserved win."*

**Tommaso Merletti**  
AC Milan

## THE EXPERTS SAY...

**Mark Tompkins –**  
Al Kass Analyst

Benfica was in their familiar white shirts today. There was a little bit of breeze blowing in the direction of the Portuguese players.

Benfica took the lead, just 90 seconds into the game; it was De Oliveira, who brought an early goal for his team.

Moments later, Benfica was leading with a double

advantage in the game, after a quality move from the Benfica players, and a great ball into the box by Ramos.

AC Milan looked like they had to get a foothold in this game. It was 3-0 at halftime, and a fantastic game from the Portuguese.

**Nick Summerbee –**  
Al Kass Analyst

AC Milan looked a bit lethargic at the start of second half – they had to push more people forward and create more pressure.

It is all about end products, and Benfica was just carving opportunities for themselves. Benfica had a hunger about them; they really kept on a fight even when things were looking very good for them.

The AC Milan players were looking very angry; things were not going their way at all today. This was another great performance by Benfica.

# ASPIRE GO DOWN FIGHTING AGAINST TOUGH TACKLING TUNIS



Aspire Academy suffered a narrow defeat by one goal to nil against Esperance Tunis, with the home side unable to break down stubborn opponents, despite playing the better football for the majority of the 90 minutes.

Esperance had built their previous two victories – against Wydad and AC Milan – on a highly physical approach that, on occasion, had trod a fine line between fair play and foul. However, as the only side yet to concede a goal in the tournament, while notching five, they were clearly a cohesive unit.

And, with a highly vocal support cheering their every kick – of ball and player - the Tunisians had an ‘extra man’ in the packed stands.

It was therefore to the enormous credit of the youngsters of Aspire Academy that they refused to be intimidated, and quickly established a rhythm to their game.

On 12 minutes, Naif Alhadhrami won a free kick 25 yards out after being fouled by Wael Dhouibi, Esperance’s outsized midfield enforcer. Hadi Abasideh stepped up, but his effort struck the Tunis wall. It was an early sign that Aspire had settled well, and they had the better of the first 20 minutes, although chances were at a premium.

But, on the half-hour mark, Tunis took the lead. Captain Mobtassar Triki advanced into the area and Faisal Azadi challenged him. Referee Mohammed Nasser saw a push in the back, and pointed to the spot without hesitation. Zied Berrima sent keeper Mahmoud Abunada the wrong way to put Esperance in front, prompting a huge, celebratory roar from the massed Tunisian support. In so doing, the lively forward maintained his record of scoring in every game at Al Kass, notching his third in as many matches.

Aspire now faced a daunting task, as they attempted to become the first team to score against Esperance in this tournament. On 50 minutes, they almost succeeded when midfielder Alhadhrami connected with a corner from the left, his powerful header somehow kept out by Tunis keeper Fares Jebali.

Aspire were beginning to gain momentum and, as the hour mark passed, they went agonisingly close to securing an equaliser, when Mekki Tombari got free down the left and teased the ball inside for Ahmed Alganehi, who was just unable to apply the finishing touch.

With 20 minutes left, the Academy went closer still to levelling the scores, when Tombari ghosted into the penalty area to

meet a cross from the left, but flashed his first-time shot just wide of the far post.

Aspire were enjoying much the better second half of the two teams but, for all their progressive approach play, found themselves frustrated at every turn. As the clock ticked down, they won a free kick wide on the left. Khalid Bin Sabaa swung in an accurate cross that centre back Abdulla Al-Ali was first to, but he could not direct his header on target.

The game moved into added time, with six minutes of additional play signalled, when Mohamed Yaccoubi barged into Alhadhrami 25 yards out, to the right of the goal, as they competed for a header. Al-Ali took the resultant free kick, only to find keeper Jebali was equal to the accurate attempt.

Ultimately, Esperance held out, and maintained their record of not conceding a goal. Heading into the semi-finals, they will be confident of further progress. The Aspire Academy youths, meanwhile, can look back with pride on a gutsy performance in which they were unlucky to lose out.

## MATCH SCORE



X



ASPIRE  
ACADEMY

1

0

ESPÉRANCE DE TUNIS

ASPIRE ACADEMY

## ESPÉRANCE DE TUNIS



16	Fares Jebali	GK
2	Ahmed Aziz Chaouachi	MF
3	Ghassen Mahresi	DF
4	Khalil Melliti	MF
5	Samer Marweni	DF
6	Ghassen Jellali	DF
7	Mobtassar Triki (Cap.)	MF
8	Hassen Rebah	DF
10	Zied Berrima	FW
18	Farouk Mimouni	FW
30	Wael Dhouibi	DF



## ASPIRE ACADEMY

## ASPIRE

22	Mahmoud Abunada	GK
2	Mohamed Mohamed	DF
4	Mohamed Aiash (Cap.)	DF
6	Faisal Azadi	MF
7	Hadi Tabasideh	FW
8	Naif Alhadhrami	MF
9	Mekki Tombari	FW
11	Ahmed Alganehi	FW
12	Mohammed Al-Naimi	DF
15	Abdalla Abdrabou	DF
17	Abdullatif Al-Ishaq	MF



**Zied Berrima, Espérance**  
MVP of the Match



*"We haven't conceded a single goal in the tournament and have played really well individually and as a team. As we enter the semis, we will continue to follow the guidance of the coach and play at a top level."*

**Ghassen Mahresi,**  
Espérance de Tunis



*"We're very disappointed to be going out after making the final round last year. We played a good game, but we were not effective enough in our chances."*

**Mohamed Aiash**  
Aspire Academy

## THE EXPERTS SAY...

**Chris Makin –**  
Al Kass Analyst

It was a fantastic atmosphere around the pitch tonight; there was a good support from the Tunisian fans. It was a great save by Jebali for Espérance in the first few minutes; it was the best chance of the game for Aspire Academy.

Aspire Academy displayed some vital tackling skills on the field – the locals were playing really well tonight.

There was a wasted free kick from Aspire Academy 28 minutes into the clock.

A penalty kick, taken by Berrima, made it 1-nil for Espérance and it stayed that way, when the halftime whistle was heard.

**Mark Tompkins –**  
Al Kass Analyst

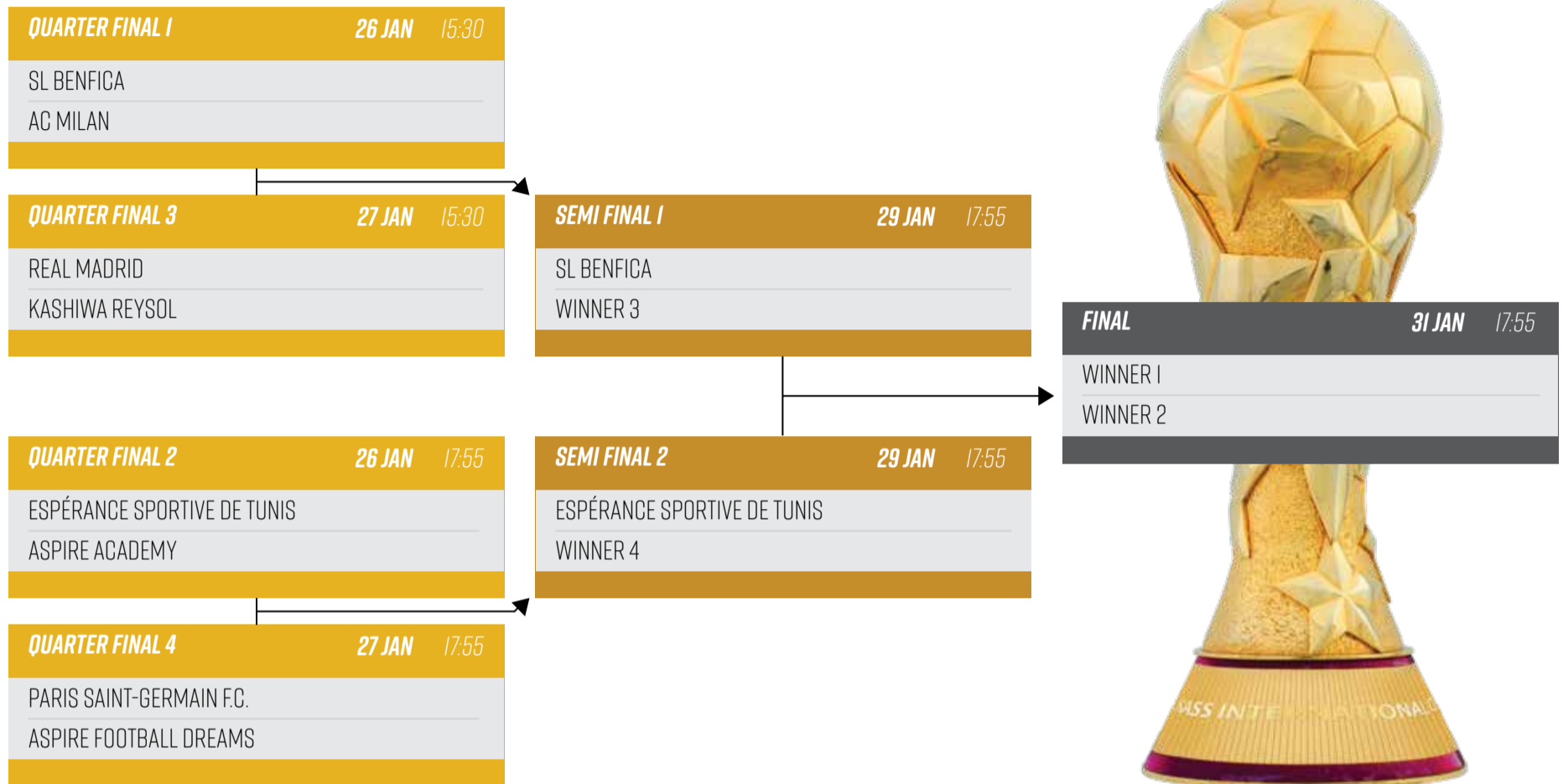
Aspire Academy was looking very anxious to get that equalizing ball in, right from the beginning of the second half. Espérance looked like they had changed tactics in this half; they were showing great character to keep their goal intact.

It was 20 minutes to go, and Espérance was still leading with that opening goal. Al-Naimi came off the game in the last

few minutes, and I thought it was strange to take a good defender off, when you were losing.

Espérance managed to hang on, until the full time whistle was heard.

# ROAD TO THE CUP



# TOP SCORERS



**GONÇALO RAMOS**  
BENFICA

**5** GOALS



**NAIF ALHADRAMI**  
ASPIRE ACADEMY

**3** GOALS



**ZIED BERRIMA**  
ESPÉRANCE SPORTIVE DE TUNIS

**3** GOALS



# ESPÉRANCE FANS REJOICE



## TODAY'S MATCHES

## TOMORROW'S MATCHES



×



15:30

REAL MADRID

KASHIWA REYSOL



ASPIRE ACADEMY

×

?

15:30

ASPIRE ACADEMY

LOSER 18



×



FOOTBALL DREAMS

17:55

PSG

ASPIRE FOOTBALL DREAMS



×

?

17:55

AC MILAN

LOSER 17

## خدمات QNB المصرفية عبر الجوّال. معاملاتك المصرفية الآن أسهل. خدمات الغد تأتيك اليوم عبر الجوّال.

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# GAMES SCHEDULE

## GROUP STAGE

GROUP A		GROUP B		GROUP C		GROUP D	
	SL Benfica		Aspire Football Dreams		AC Milan		Paris Saint-Germain F.C.
	Guangzhou Evergrande		Fenerbahçe S.K.		Espérance Sportive de Tunis		Tottenham Hotspur F.C.
	Aspire Academy		Real Madrid		Wydad AC		Kashiwa Reysol

DATE	NO.	TEAMS				TIME	VENUE	
Sun 21.01.	1	Real Madrid	6	VS	2	Fenerbahçe S.K.	16:25	5
	2	Guangzhou Evergrande	0	VS	4	SL Benfica	18:30	5
	3	Espérance Sportive de Tunis	3	VS	0	Wydad AC	20:35	5
Mon 22.01.	4	Aspire Football Dreams	2	VS	0	Fenerbahçe S.K.	15:30	4
	5	Guangzhou Evergrande	1	VS	1	Aspire Academy	17:35	4
	6	Kashiwa Reysol	3	VS	2	Tottenham Hotspur F.C.	19:40	4
Tue 23.01.	7	AC Milan	1	VS	0	Wydad AC	15:30	5
	8	Aspire Football Dreams	1	VS	1	Real Madrid	17:35	5
	9	Tottenham Hotspur F.C.	2	VS	4	Paris Saint-Germain F.C.	19:40	5
Wed 24.01.	10	AC Milan	0	VS	2	Espérance Sportive de Tunis	15:30	4
	11	SL Benfica	7	VS	3	Aspire Academy	17:35	4
	12	Kashiwa Reysol	1	VS	1	Paris Saint-Germain F.C.	19:40	4
<b>POSITION 9 - 12</b>								
Thu 25.01.	13	Tottenham Hotspur F.C.	2	VS	0	Guangzhou Evergrande	15:30	5
	14	Fenerbahçe S.K.	1(4)	VS	1(5)	Wydad AC	17:55	5
<b>QUARTER FINALS</b>								
Fri 26.01.	15	SL Benfica	6	VS	0	AC Milan	15:30	4
	16	Espérance Sportive de Tunis	1	VS	0	Aspire Academy	17:55	4
Sat 27.01.	17	Real Madrid		VS		Kashiwa Reysol	15:30	5
	18	Paris Saint-Germain F.C.		VS		Aspire Football Dreams	17:55	5
<b>PLAY OFFS POSITION 5 - 8</b>								
Sun 28.01.	19	Aspire Academy		VS		Loser Game No. 18	15:30	4
	20	AC Milan		VS		Loser Game No. 17	17:55	4
<b>SEMI FINALS</b>								
Mon 29.01.	21	Winner Game No. 16		VS		Winner Game No. 18	15:30	5
	22	Winner Game No. 15		VS		Winner Game No. 17	17:55	5
<b>POSITION 5 - 8</b>								
Tue 30.01.	23	Loser Game No. 19		VS		Loser Game No. 20	15:30	4
	24	Winner Game No. 19		VS		Winner Game No. 20	17:55	4
<b>POSITION 3 - 4</b>								
Wed 31.01.	25	Loser Game No. 21		VS		Loser Game No. 22	15:30	5
<b>FINAL</b>								
Wed 31.01.	26	Winner Game No. 21		VS		Winner Game No. 22	17:55	5

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