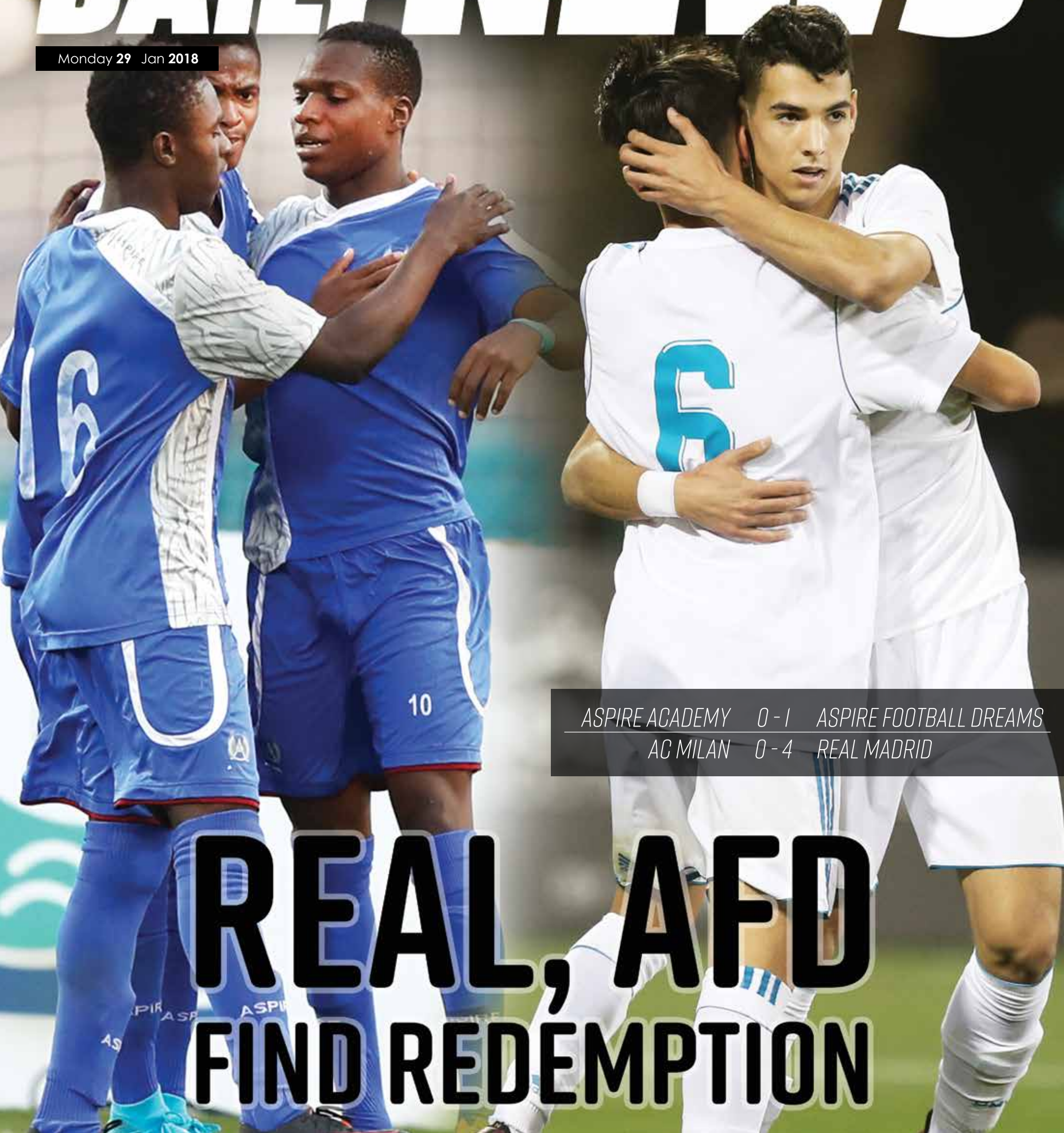


# ALKASS<sup>®</sup> INTERNATIONAL CUP DAILY NEWS

Monday 29 Jan 2018



ASPIRE ACADEMY 0 - 1 ASPIRE FOOTBALL DREAMS  
AC MILAN 0 - 4 REAL MADRID

# REAL, AFD FIND REDEMPTION



# REDEMPTION FOR ASPIRE FOOTBALL DREAMS AND REAL MADRID



*THOUGH THEIR 2018 AL KASS INTERNATIONAL CUP TITLE HOPES WERE SNUFFED OUT IN THE QUARTER-FINALS, THE FOUR TEAMS WHO TOOK TO THE PITCH YESTERDAY WERE PLAYING FOR PRIDE, AS WELL AS A SPOT IN THE FIFTH-PLACE GAME. ON A BLUSTERY DAY, ASPIRE FOOTBALL DREAMS DEFEATED ASPIRE ACADEMY, 1-0, AND REAL MADRID EMERGED VICTORIOUS OVER AC MILAN, 4-0.*

Aspire Football Dreams was playing less than 24 hours after a heartbreaking quarter-final loss to Paris Saint-Germain on penalties. Despite the quick turnaround, the AFD squad came out aggressive. Early on, Isaac Nuhu drew a foul with a strong run down the left, and his subsequent free kick nearly found the top corner before being tipped away by Academy keeper Mahmoud Abunada. In the 40th minute, it was Nuhu again causing problems for Academy, advancing into the area, only to be turned away again by Abunada.

The wind played havoc with both sides, preventing effective crosses and long balls, and the game's decisive goal came thanks to a bit of individual brilliance. After Abunada rolled the ball to defender Abdulla Al-Ali, AFD's Sibiry Keita picked the centre back's pocket and slotted home a low shot.

That was all Aspire Football Dreams would need, as their back line and the wind conspired to stymie Aspire Academy's attack. A late chance by Fahad Al-Abdulla sailed high, ending the host side's hopes of equalising.

In the nightcap, Real Madrid showed the form that won them the title last year, helping to erase slightly the memories of their quarter-final loss to Kashiwa Reysol. It took just 16

minutes for the Spaniards to take the lead over AC Milan, as Javier Lancho knocked home a rebound off keeper Niccolo' Zanellato. In the 39th minute, David Franco fed Jorge Ramirez for a straightforward goal, and Real were on their way.

In the second half, Cristian Garcia added to the lead by stealing the ball inside the AC Milan area and putting it past Zanellato. The scoring concluded with a fluke goal by Alvaro De Frias from a free kick that Zanellato let through his hands on a cold, windy evening.

Aspire Football Dreams and Real Madrid will play tomorrow at 5:55 for fifth place, preceded at 3:30 pm by AC Milan and Aspire Academy in the seventh-place match.

Today's semi-final round starts at 3:30 pm, as Espérance de Tunis square off with Paris Saint-Germain. The Tunisian side hasn't conceded a goal in the 2018 tournament thanks to their physical defence, while PSG has played unevenly on their way to the final four. At 5:55 pm, Kashiwa Reysol will face Benfica for the other final spot. Benfica have emerged as the tournament favourite behind a whopping 17 goals in three games, but they'll face a tough test in Kashiwa's disciplined back line.



# FANS SHOW SUPPORT DURING CONSOLATION MATCHES

THE CUP MAY HAVE BEEN OUT OF REACH FOR THE TEAMS PLAYING IN YESTERDAY'S CONSOLATION ROUND, BUT FANS NEVERTHELESS BRAVED THE CHILLY WEATHER TO SUPPORT THEIR TEAMS ON THE EIGHTH DAY OF THE 2018 AL KASS INTERNATIONAL CUP. ASPIRE ACADEMY, ASPIRE FOOTBALL DREAMS, AC MILAN AND REAL MADRID, WHO WERE ALL KNOCKED OUT IN THE QUARTER-FINALS, BATTLED FOR A SPOT IN THE FIFTH-PLACE GAME. BOTH TEAMS IN THE DAY'S FIRST MATCH HAVE LOCAL TIES, AS ASPIRE ACADEMY IS THE TOURNAMENT HOST AND ASPIRE FOOTBALL DREAMS IS A TEAM OF PROMISING PLAYERS FROM DEVELOPING COUNTRIES FORMED THROUGH A CSR INITIATIVE BY ASPIRE.

Despite the windy conditions, Mohamed Jallal turned out to cheer on the young players.

*"I support Aspire Academy, but both Aspire Academy and Aspire Football Dreams are strong teams with skilled players. Among the international teams, I'm a fan of Real Madrid, and I enjoyed the matches they played—it's a shame they were knocked out of the Cup."*

Real Madrid and AC Milan faced off in the night's second match, giving fans another opportunity to watch the future stars of two of the world's top clubs.

Said Abdullah Khaled, "It's a pity Milan has been knocked out of the tournament, but I'm glad I got the chance to see them play, as they have been my favourite team since I was young. I'm a football player myself, so seeing youth teams from across the world play here is exciting."



## Quote of The Day

*"Our team is driven by discipline and good organisation, but we also encourage our players to use their initiative on the field and we trust their tactical decision-making."*

**Shin Yamanaka**, Coach, Kashiwa Reysol

## TOP PLAYERS OF THE DAY

### Match 1

**Mahmoud Abunada,**  
Aspire Academy

Solid in goal versus Aspire Football Dreams

ASPIRE  
ACADEMY

### Match 2

**Cristian Vassilakis Garcia,**  
Real Madrid

Goal in 4-0 win over AC Milan





# ASPIRE FOOTBALL DREAMS SECURE NARROW VICTORY OVER ACADEMY

Aspire Football Dreams overcame Aspire Academy by a single goal to nil in a match where the windy conditions influenced proceedings as much as any one player.

In their previous game, Aspire Academy had stood up well to the unashamedly physical approach of Espérance de Tunis, and were unfortunate to have suffered a single goal defeat despite playing the better football.

Meanwhile, less than 24 hours after suffering a heartbreaking defeat to Paris Saint-Germain in a dramatic quarter-final penalty shootout, AFD had to pick themselves up and go again.

It said much about the professional approach of both sides that the youngsters seemed to have put previous disappointments behind them as they quickly resumed their precise, high-energy passing games.

In the opening stages, AFD's Isaac Nuhu looked particularly lively and, on 12 minutes, he carved out the first chance of the game. His strong run down the left was abruptly halted, and the tricky winger dusted himself down and took the resultant free kick himself, curling an effort towards the top corner that Academy keeper Mahmoud Abunada did well to keep out.

Five minutes before half time, Nuhu got away from his marker once more and advanced into the penalty area, but Abunada was again equal to his shot.

A stiff breeze blew across Aspire Zone, requiring both sides to keep the ball on the ground and play close possession football. It also provided an opportunity for the Academy, with the wind at their backs in

the first half, to attempt shots from distance, but they were largely unable to escape the attentions of AFD's combative backline in order to do so.

If anything, the wind speed increased as the second half began, making it increasingly difficult for either side to retain possession, with long balls going astray and crosses sailing beyond their intended targets. It seemed that only a moment of individual skill would break the deadlock and, on 64 minutes, this proved to be the case.

Academy keeper Abunada rolled the ball out to Abdulla Al-Ali but, as the centre back attempted to get away from Sibiry Keita, the AFD midfielder robbed him of possession, cut inside and thrashed a low effort into the right-hand corner.

With a quarter of an hour remaining, AFD coach Serine Dia withdrew midfield captain Leslie Adeniah for defender Salim Diaby, in an attempt to preserve the slender advantage that his side held.

In truth, progress was becoming more challenging for the Academy players as they attempted to build attacks in the face of increasingly blustery conditions. As the final whistle approached, Fahad Al-Abdulla went on a mazy run through the middle, evading several challenges before letting fly, only for the wind to carry his shot high above the goal.

Football Dreams were ultimately good value for their win, while Aspire Academy could take pride in a determined performance that, unfortunately, produced little reward.



## MATCH SCORE



X


**FOOTBALL  
DREAMS**

0

1

ASPIRE ACADEMY

ASPIRE FOOTBALL DREAMS



ASPIRE ACADEMY

ASPIRE

22	Mahmoud Abunada	GK
2	Mohamed Mohamed	DF
3	Abdulla Al-Ali (Cap.)	DF
7	Hadi Tabasideh	FW
8	Naif Alhadhrami	MF
11	Ahmed Alganehi	FW
12	Mohammed Al-Naimi	DF
14	Fahad Al-Abdulla	MF
15	Abdalla Abdrabou	DF
17	Abdullatif Al-Ishaq	MF
19	Jassem Abdulsallam	



KASHIWA REYSOL

DREAMS

22	Appiah Kubi	GK
2	Peter Ampong	DF
4	Momodou Jallow	DF
8	Leslie Adeniah (Cap.)	MF
9	Umar Lutalo	FW
10	Sibiry Keita	MF
11	Isaac Nuhu	FW
12	Isaac Annan	DF
13	Kwame Opoku	FW
14	Babucarr Boye	MF
18	Shafic Ssebyala	DF



Mahmoud Abunada, Aspire Academy  
MVP of the Match



*“It was a difficult match as the players were still reeling from yesterday’s loss and their morale was low, but these defeats prepare them for other big losses they will face in their football careers.”*

**Serine Dia**  
Aspire Football Dreams Coach



*“I would like to congratulate the team, we have stuck together and played well and today proved that a loss doesn’t mean we have to give up.”*

**Isaac Nuhu,**  
Aspire Football Dreams

THE EXPERTS SAY...

<p><b>Nick Summerbee –</b> <i>Al Kass Analyst</i></p> <p>After the first 17 minutes into the game, it looked like Aspire Football Dreams were dominating the game.</p> <p>Aspire Academy looked like they had to push more, and try to create some opportunities. Nuhu was working hard on the right side of the pitch today; he is one of those players who have shown a lot of quality in this tournament.</p>	<p>The referee should have let the game go on at times, even when a player or two went down – it looked like some of these players were diving.</p> <p>At this stage, as a player, you should not be diving at all; diving is for children.</p>	<p><b>Mark Tompkins –</b> <i>Al Kass Analyst</i></p> <p>The second half had a stuttering start, with substitutions and injuries. Abunada's knee looked heavily bandaged, but he continued to play.</p> <p>Aspire Football Dreams made three changes at halftime, and Aspire Academy made a change four minutes into half time.</p> <p>I was quite surprised that the coaches were making these</p>	<p>changes – it's not like anything really changes after halftime.</p> <p>Keita finally decided to go on his own, to bring a goal for Aspire Football Dreams; It was a mistake from Aspire Academy, after Al-Ali gave the ball away.</p> <p>Aspire Academy was working so hard in this match, but they were not able to create any clear-cut opportunities.</p>
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# MAJESTIC MADRID PLUNDER FOUR AGAINST MILAN



Real Madrid booked a spot in the fifth-place match with a convincing 4-0 victory over fellow giants of European game AC Milan. The Spaniards had taken a shock exit from the knockout stage after falling victim to a smash-and-grab raid by Kashiwa Reysol in the quarter-finals, and seemed determine to demonstrate their true pedigree this tie round.

Indeed, Real were almost in front with the game's very first attack, with Alex Mendoza running clear through the middle, only for a last-ditch tackle to check his progress as he shaped to round keeper Niccolo' Zanelato.

On 10 minutes, the Milan stopper again had to be alert to keep out a first-time snapshot from Mendoza, as the two technically accomplished sides went head to head in a thoroughly competitive encounter.

But Zanelato was helpless to prevent his side from going behind on 16 minutes despite diving acrobatically to touch a flicked-on corner onto the post, as Javier Lancho was on hand to convert the rebound before the keeper could recover.

Madrid were in the ascendancy, creating a succession of presentable chances as Milan struggled to gather momentum although, in a rare foray forward on 27 minutes, Daniel Maldini saw his decent effort from the left go just wide of the post.

Despite having endured a rather disappointing campaign thus far at Al Kass 2018, culminating in a 6-0 hammering at the hands of the imperious Benfica, it was to Milan's enormous credit that their players were giving their all in this match, with little more than pride to play for. In the finest Italian tradition, the Rossoneri's defence was particularly well organised, providing a platform that allowed the team to grow into the game as half time approached.

However, on 39 minutes, their steady progress was halted when Madrid launched a rapid counterattack. David Franco got to the byline on the left and cut the ball back for Jorge Ramirez to apply a straightforward finish and double Los Blancos' lead.

Madrid maintained their dominance as the second half got underway, and impressive centre back Sergio Santos was inches away from scoring a third with a ferocious strike from all of 30 yards that flew just wide.

Milan's life was made all the more difficult by Real's highly disciplined approach, which ensured they had a minimum of eight players behind the ball whenever the Italians were in possession. In order to penetrate this formidable defensive unit, AC needed to commit numbers to attack but seemed reluctant to do so, with their forward players often isolated and unable to hold the ball up.

With Madrid now looking comfortable, coach Manuel Fernandez withdrew captain Javier Diez on the hour mark, with Julio Escorcia slotting in at centre back as Los Blancos switched to a back three. Further forward, Real continued to fashion opportunities and, on 67 minutes, Cristian Garcia conjured a wonderful strike from wide on the left, his curling effort rattling the crossbar as Milan fought to hold back the tide.

Their efforts were in vain, however, and on 72 minutes Real were three goals to the good when Garcia stole the ball from Tommaso Merletti inside the area and planted the ball through the keeper's legs.

Milan's misery was compounded five minutes later when Madrid won a free kick wide on the right. Substitute Alvaro De Frias swung in a high cross which keeper Zanelato rose to claim, only for the ball to somehow slip through his fingers and into the net.

The goal encapsulated AC's poor fortune throughout a tournament where results have not matched the side's potential. Madrid, meanwhile, will rue the late goal conceded against Reysol last time out, as they again showed that they are a team with all the necessary attributes to have triumphed at Al Kass.

MATCH SCORE



X



0

4

AC MILAN

REAL MADRID



AC MILAN

1

GK Niccolo' Zanellato

GK

3

DF Gabriele Basani

DF

5

Edoardo Brusa

DF

7

Alessandro Sala (C)

MF

8

Marco Frigerio

MF

9

Riccardo Tonin

FW

10

Daniel Maldini

FW

11

Siaka Haidara

FW

15

Andrea Porrini

MF

16


Samuele Ruggeri

DF

20

Tommaso Merletti

DF





Cristian Garcia, Real Madrid

MVP of the Match

REAL MADRID

1

Adrian Moya

GK

4

Sergio Santos

DF

6

Eneko Gines

MF

7

David Franco

FW

8

Carlos Gonzalez

MF

9

Alex Mendoza

FW

11

Javier Lancho

FW

12

Esteban Caballero

DF

14

Javier Diez (C)

MF


16

Jorge Ramirez

MF

17

Cristian Garcia





This tournament has been a massive learning curve and we'll return to Italy and focus on the areas that need improving."

Alessandro Sala,  
AC Milan



We have learned a lot through our participation in Al Kass and I will continue to work hard to go as far as I can in my football career."

Cristian Garcia  
Real Madrid

THE EXPERTS SAY...

Chris Makin –  
Al Kass Analyst

Wonderful play by Real Madrid, right from the start of the game; they were playing better of the two sides. AC Milan was very busy on the far side, and Brusa was showing some great tackling skills today.

There was a very stiff breeze blowing from the right to left direction tonight. Soon, we were looking at some brilliant action from Lancho; it was a great shot into the net.

It was a superb play from Real Madrid, which brought their second goal.

Ramirez had great pace on the ball, even though he did not have the wind on this side.

Mark Tompkins –  
Al Kass Analyst

It was much better from AC Milan, in the second half; they had more control over the ball after they came back after halftime. It was the first time today, we had seen players run and shoot with the wind behind them. The Real Madrid players were showing some quick feet tonight.

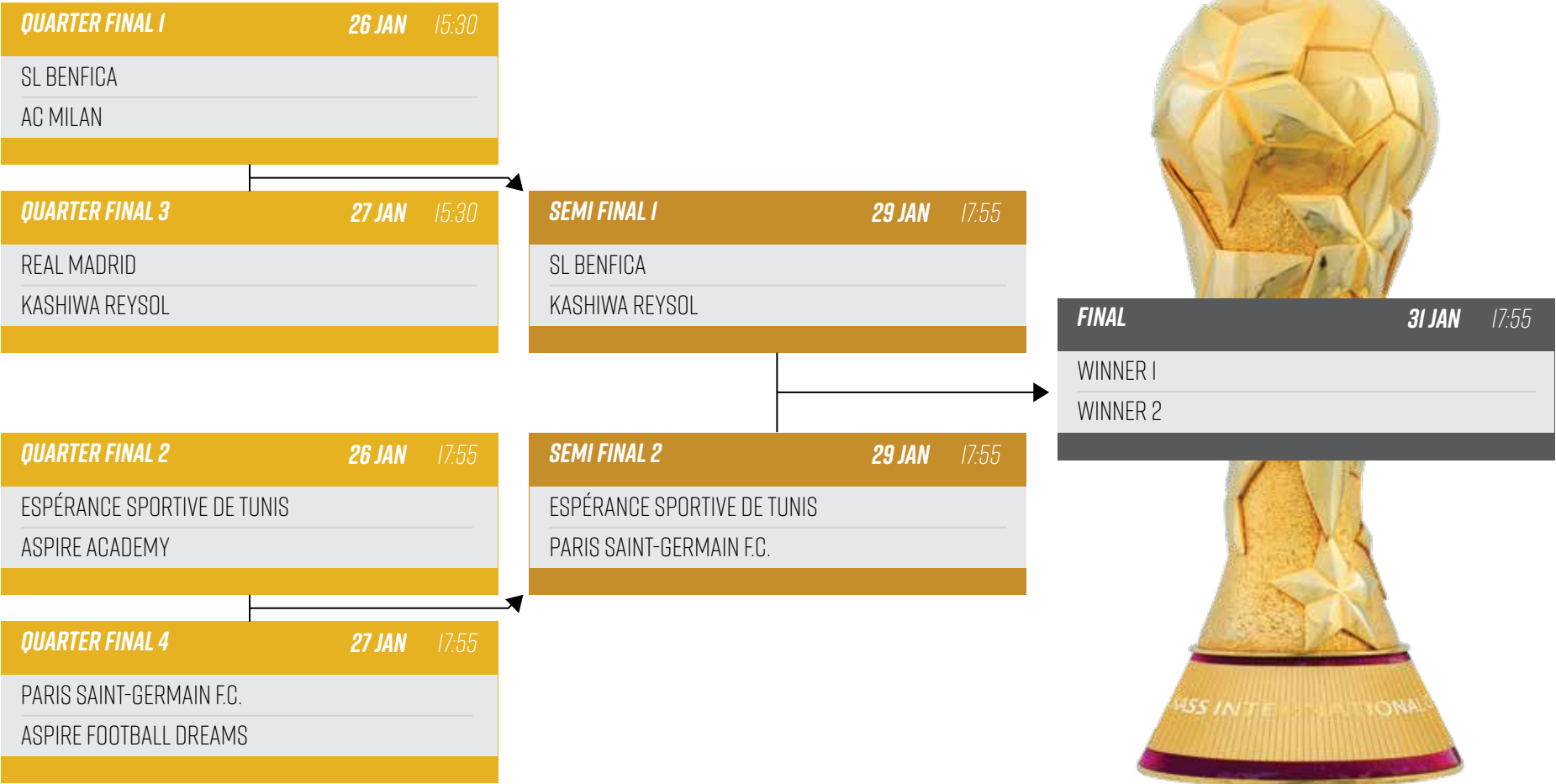
Santos was going for a shot from a long way out, 55 minutes into the game; it should

have been a goal. Manuel Fernandez did not look very happy in the second half.

It was a great individual effort by Vassilakis, straight through the legs of Zanellato, which brought another goal for Real Madrid.



# ROAD TO THE CUP



# TOP SCORERS



GONÇALO RAMOS  
BENFICA

5 GOALS



MAO HOSOYA  
KASHIWA REYSOL

4 GOALS



ZIED BERRIMA  
ESPÉRANCE SPORTIVE DE TUNIS

3 GOALS



NAIF ALHADHRAMI  
ASPIRE ACADEMY

3 GOALS



# SPANISH SUCCESS



## TODAY'S MATCHES



×



15:30

ESPÉRANCE DE TUNIS

PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN F.C.



×



15:30

ASPIRE ACADEMY

AC MILAN



×



17:55

SL BENFICA

KASHIWA REYSOL



×



17:55

ASPIRE FOOTBALL DREAMS

REAL MADRID



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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
POSITION 9 - 12								
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
QUARTER FINALS								
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	2	VS	3	Kashiwa Reysol	15:30	5
	18	Paris Saint-Germain F.C.	0(4)	VS	0(2)	Aspire Football Dreams	17:55	5
PLAY OFFS POSITION 5 - 8								
Sun 28.01.	19	Aspire Academy	0	VS	1	Aspire Football Dreams	15:30	4
	20	AC Milan	0	VS	4	Real Madrid	17:55	4
SEMI FINALS								
Mon 29.01.	21	Espérance Sportive de Tunis	VS		Paris Saint-Germain F.C.		15:30	5
	22	SL Benfica	VS		Kashiwa Reysol		17:55	5
POSITION 5 - 8								
Tue 30.01.	23	Aspire Academy	VS		AC Milan		15:30	4
	24	Aspire Football Dreams	VS		Real Madrid		17:55	4
POSITION 3 - 4								
Wed 31.01.	25	Loser Game No. 21	VS		Loser Game No. 22		15:30	5
FINAL								
Wed 31.01.	26	Winner Game No. 21	VS		Winner Game No. 22		17:55	5

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