

ALKASS[®]
INTERNATIONAL CUP



DAILY NEWS

Tuesday 30 Jan 2018



FINAL TWO



ESPÉRANCE DE TUNIS 2-4 PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN F.C.
SL BENFICA 3(7)-3(8) KASHIWA REYSOL

PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN AND KASHIWA REYSOL HEAD TO AL KASS FINALS



THE SEMI-FINAL ROUND OF THE 2018 AL KASS INTERNATIONAL CUP TURNED THE TOURNAMENT ON ITS HEAD. PREVIOUSLY UNSCORED-UPON ESPÉRANCE DE TUNIS GAVE AWAY TWO EASY GOALS EN ROUTE TO A 4-2 LOSS TO PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN. MEANWHILE, GOAL MACHINE BENFICA, WHICH HAD SCORED 17 GOALS IN ITS FIRST THREE GAMES, FOUND NO QUARTER FROM A STALWART KASHIWA REYSOL, WINNING ON PENALTIES.

Tomorrow's final will pit the popular Japanese side against the two-time defending champion Parisians, who only made it out of the quarter-finals by the skin of their teeth, edging Aspire Football Dreams on penalties.

Espérance de Tunis rode an aggressive defense to the semis, and looked to continue that play in the round's opening match. Given that, it was shocking when Espérance's back line was their undoing early. On 15 minutes, the Tunisians failed to clear a loose ball in their own area, and PSG's Loic Mbe Soh knocked home a solid finish for a 1-0 lead.

Incredibly, the stout Tunisians suffered another lapse less than a minute later. With PSG pressing, Espérance keeper Fares Jebali came out to deal with the danger, but another failed clearance left PSG's Arthur Zagre with a golden opportunity. He took full advantage, silencing the raucous Tunis supporters.

A third goal, on 28 minutes, by PSG's Alexandre Fressange, seemed to put things totally out of reach for Espérance. But the French side let their opponents back in the match with careless play of their own. PSG keeper Yanis Saidani attempted a seemingly routine pass to a teammate, but Tunis's Zied Berrima intercepted and fed Mobtassar Triki for an easy finish.

After the break, PSG wasted no time building their lead back to three when Adil Aouchiche capped a fine run with a goal on a nifty give-and-go with Ruben Providence. Tunis found life late, when Farouk Mimouni dispossessed Soh and beat Saidani low. But that was all the African side would get, and PSG celebrated a return to the final.

The nightcap provided as much drama as the Al Kass tournament has seen in its history. Benfica, who had sliced through all competition to this point, appropriately scored first. Tiago Gouveia ran down a ball over the top and put it past Kashiwa keeper Leo Kokubo, and it appeared the Portuguese were well on their way again.

But Kashiwa answered, with Hiryu Okuda equalising on 38 minutes and, stunningly, going ahead 2-1 early in the second half.

When the Japanese scored with 25 minutes to play, all the air seemed to have gone out of the Portuguese side. But with 15 to play, Nuno Cunha brought Benfica within one with a powerful header off a corner. As time ticked down, Benfica launched one more attack, and Ronaldo Camara stormed through the packed area to equalise and touch off a Portuguese celebration.

It was Kashiwa who laughed last, however, converting on all their penalty kicks. Benfica was perfect through four, but Gonçalo Ramos—the tournament's leading scorer—missed wide, sending the Japanese through.

EMOTIONS RUN HIGH AT THRILLING AL KASS SEMI-FINAL

THE AL KASS SEMI-FINALS SAW A WORKMANLIKE PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN WIN FOLLOWED BY AN EXHILARATING SHOOTOUT VICTORY BY KASHIWA REYSOL, SENDING BOTH TO TOMORROW'S FINAL MATCH. DESPITE A CHILL IN THE AIR, FANS PACKED THE ASPIRE ZONE STANDS TO CHEER ON THEIR FAVOURITE TEAMS DURING THE NAIL-BITING MATCHES, WITH KASHIWA AND ESPÉRANCE DE TUNIS, AS USUAL, WELL-REPRESENTED.



الاتحاد القطري لكرة القدم
Qatar Football Association



The Tunisian side's loss in the night's opening match couldn't put a damper on the spirits of the Espérance supporters who packed the stands, banging drums and singing songs throughout.

Tunisian resident of Qatar Mohamed Sadam was one of those supporting his countrymen.

"It's been incredible to be able to show my support for Espérance — they are the top team in Tunisia," he said. "It's a huge disappointment that they didn't make it to the final, but they made us so proud. They fought until the end and gave it their all."

The second semifinal came down to penalties after Benfica stunned the crowd with an equaliser in 90th minute. That only delayed Kashiwa's celebration, as they make their first Al Kass final

Local fan Mohamed Mirza, who supports Al Sadd Sports Club in the QNB Stars League, shifted loyalties for the tournament.

"I have been supporting Benfica; I think they played brilliantly throughout the tournament, and this was the best match of the tournament so far, with two very strong teams," he said after the second semi-final. "Benfica was stronger in the first half, while Kashiwa dominated the second half."

Quote of The Day

"We had an excellent experience in Al Kass, we have learned a great deal and realised we have a long way to go and many areas to improve on. Thank you to Al Kass for inviting us back to participate in the tournament, and a big thank you to our fans whose support has meant so much to us."

Zied Ben Amara, Espérance de Tunis

TOP PLAYERS OF THE DAY

Match 1

Adil Aouchie,
Paris Saint-Germain

Goal in 4-2 win over
Espérance de Tunis



Match 2

Leo Kokubo,
Kashiwa Reysol

Held off high-powered
Benfica in semis win





PSG POWER PAST ESPERANCE TO REACH AL KASS FINAL

Paris Saint-Germain advanced to the final of Al Kass 2018 after overcoming a stern examination set by Espérance de Tunis, and prevailing by four goals to two.

Going into this game PSG knew that — at the very least — they would need to do something that no opponent of Espérance had managed up to now: score a goal against the wily Tunisians, the only team yet to concede in the tournament.

Once again, raucous support for the North Africans was provided from the stands. Indeed, if trophies were handed out for the tournament's most passionate – and vocal – crowd, there would be no contest. The Espérance fans have been magnificent throughout, helping to make Al Kass 2018 a truly memorable contest.

In the early stages, Tunis were all hustle and bustle, working tirelessly to knock PSG out of their stride and disrupt the French youngsters' slick passing game. The tactic was largely successful, with few clear chances created in the opening period.

But on 15 minutes, Saint-Germain went in front after a corner from the right was not dealt with and, in the ensuing melee, captain Loic Mbe Soh turned the ball in from close range.

Astonishingly, the lead was doubled within a minute, after a rapid move down the PSG left. Tunis keeper Fares Jebali was quickly off his line to snuff out the danger, but the ball escaped his grasp and was cleared directly into the path of the onrushing Arthur Zagre, who needed no second invitation to rifle home.

From a position of relative comfort, a shell-shocked Espérance were now struggling to retain their composure. And, on 28 minutes, they were three down. PSG worked the ball well out to the left, and Tanguy Coulibaly supplied a low, teasing cross that forward Alexandre Fressange met with a first time shot into the near corner.

Tunis looked dead and buried, only to be handed an improbable lifeline five minutes later. PSG keeper Yanis Saidani received a backpass under no pressure, but his attempted clearance was cut out by Zied Berrima on the right of the area. He squared for captain Mobtassar Triki to pass into an open goal, sparking scenes of delirium on the terraces.

With seven minutes to the break, Tunis almost reduced the deficit further, when Berrima's spectacular free kick from the edge of the box sailed narrowly over the bar.

It was now PSG's turn to feel the pressure as Espérance mounted a series of attacks. The Tunisians' physical approach occasionally strayed beyond fair play and, on 41 minutes, midfield hardman Wael Dhouibi's wild lunge at Soh earned a well-deserved yellow card, marking the final significant act of a breathtaking first half.

There was no let up as the second period got underway, and PSG re-established their three-goal cushion with the first attack of the half.

Adil Aouchiche set off on a marauding run from his own half, dancing past several challenges and spraying the ball out left to Ruben Providence, before advancing into the area and getting on the end of a low cross to finish from six yards out. It was a goal worthy of the grandest stages.

With the game approaching the hour mark, the shadows lengthened on Aspire Pitch 5 as the sun began to set behind the main stand. And, with it, Espérance's hopes of making the final of Al Kass 2018 began to recede. PSG were now in total command, refusing to be put out of their stride by the continual chanting and singing of the Tunis fans, who remained in high spirits despite their team's travails.

And then, implausibly, Tunis were once again back in the game on 68 minutes. There seemed to be little danger as PSG centre back Soh attempted to shepherd the ball out for a goal kick on the right, until his pocket was picked by the tenacious Farouk Mimouni, who cut back from the byline before firing low into the far corner.

Tunis poured forward in numbers in search of a third goal that would set up a nailbiting finale, but there was to be no further reward for their persistence, as PSG held out for a merited victory.

Having won the inaugural tournament in 2012, and again triumphed in 2015, the young Parisians are chasing a unique hat-trick. After this accomplished performance, few would rule out their chances.


X


MATCH SCORE

2

ESPÉRANCE DE TUNIS

4

PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN F.C.

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



PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN F.C.



1	Yanis Saidani	GK
3	Arthur Zagre	DF
4	Loic Mbe Soh	DF
5	Curtis Fiawoo	DF
7	Timothee Pembele	DF
11	Maxen Kapo	MF
12	Adil Aouchiche	MF
13	Anfane M'Ze	MF
15	Tanguy Coulibaly	FW
17	Ruben Providence	FW
18	Alexandre Fressange	FW



Adil Aouchiche, Paris Saint-Germain
MVP of the Match



"We didn't start the game well, even though we were well-prepared for it. Unfortunately, we conceded a lot of goals, but this is football."

Helmi Nesibi,
Espérance de Tunis



"The coach warned us that it would be a tough match and he was right. We were lucky to start the game well and thankfully it paid off and we are through to the final."

Adil Aouchiche,
Paris Saint-Germain

THE EXPERTS SAY...

Chris Makin –
Al Kass Analyst

Espérance were looking very comfortable today, when the match started. They were also very organized and had more possession of the ball.

It was great goalkeeping by Jebali, to come out of the box, 8 minutes into the clock, to save the ball.

The first goal from Paris Saint-Germain was very scruffy; Espérance never cleared the

danger. I'll never know how that ball went in – Loic Soh just tapped in, from inside the six-yard box, and the ball went straight into the net.

In the first minutes into the match, it was all Espérance in the faces of Paris Saint-Germain, and afterwards it was looking nothing like that at all.

Mark Tompkins –
Al Kass Analyst

Aouchiche made it 4-1 for Paris Saint-Germain, 40 seconds into the second half.

The Espérance fans were singing, and creating a wonderful atmosphere on the pitch today.

It was just under a quarter of the game to go, when Mimouni brought a second goal for Espérance and the Africans

wasted a free kick in the final minute. Nevertheless, it was a stunning performance from Paris Saint-Germain today.

CAPTIVATING KASHIWA BEAT BRILLIANT BENFICA ON PENALTIES



Kashiwa Reysol gatecrashed their way to the final of Al Kass 2018, overcoming a magnificent Benfica side on penalties after a thrilling match – one of the greatest the tournament has ever seen – ended 3-3 in normal time.

The Portuguese team had notched up an astonishing 17 goals in three matches en route to the semi finals, posting a goal difference of +14. Reysol, in contrast, had recorded two narrow 3-2 victories and a 1-1 draw, repeatedly demonstrating an ability to prevail against teams who created far more chances. History would repeat itself on a night of wonderful entertainment at the Aspire Zone.

From the first whistle, Benfica set about demonstrating their attacking prowess, and were almost ahead within a minute. Tiago Gouveia broke free down the right and crossed for Gonçalo Ramos, who failed to connect properly with the goal at his mercy. Still, the chance set the tone for the opening period, with the talented Portuguese engineering a slew of presentable opportunities.

The Japanese seemed happy to sit deep, hoping to catch their opponents on the break although, with the game 15 minutes old, they had not managed to mount a meaningful attack.

And, midway through the first half, Gouveia deservedly put Benfica in front after running onto a ball over the top and rounding keeper Leo Kokubo, before slotting into an open goal. Within seconds, Gomes could have made it two, only for his low effort from the right of the area to roll just wide of the far post.

The Portuguese whiz kids were by now utterly dominant, leaving their Japanese counterparts to chase shadows as they sprayed the ball around, content to wait for another opening.

Yet, when the next chance arrived, it fell to Kashiwa, who took full advantage. On 38 minutes, Hiryu Okuda latched onto a high ball from his own half and beat the defender before applying the simplest of finishes to level matters. The goal was almost identical to Benfica's opener. It was also Kashiwa's only shot on target of the first half but, once again, they had made it count.

The second period got underway and normal service resumed, with an endless procession of one-way traffic in the direction of the Reysol goal.

Kashiwa were now playing with 10 men behind the ball as Benfica continued to press. And, astonishingly, the tactic worked a treat on the hour mark as the Japanese took a shock lead.

Lone striker Okuda chased the ball down on the halfway line and played a through ball for Mao Hosoya to chase. Benfica centre back Francisco De Morais got there first and passed back for keeper Samuel Soares to clear. However, the goalie took a heavy first touch and was instantly punished by Hosoya, who dispossessed him before finishing calmly.

And, with 25 minutes remaining, Kashiwa added a third goal with their third attempt on target, when a corner from the left was flicked on for Okuda to plant the simplest of headers from close range, with Soares rooted to the spot.

To Benfica's credit, they continued to display the same attacking instincts that had taken them so far. And, on 70 minutes, marauding midfielder Ronaldo Camara was centimetres away from narrowing the deficit when his magnificent curling strike from 25 yards out slammed into the foot of the right-hand post.

With each passing minute, the prolific Portuguese created a new opportunity, but the Kashiwa backline stood firm until, with 15 minutes remaining, Cunha powered home a header from a corner on the left to set up a grandstand finish.

Kashiwa keeper Kokubo was performing heroics to keep his side in front, putting his body on the line to frustrate the Portuguese as the clock ticked down. Benfica looked to be heading out when, with five seconds left, Camara powered through a crowded area to blast home from close range. It was an incredible finish to a storming 90 minutes of frantic football.

Yet the drama was far from over, as a pulsating penalty shootout began. The first nine spot kicks were converted and, with sudden death looking, Benfica's Ramos – the tournament's leading scorer – blasted his effort wide.

It was a game that the Portuguese youngsters did not deserve to lose, but enormous credit must also go to the kids from Kashiwa, who stuck brilliantly to their gameplan. It is the fourth time that Reysol have appeared at Al Kass, and they have acquitted themselves superbly well on each occasion. Few will begrudge the Japanese side if they manage to go all the way this time.



X



MATCH SCORE

3 [7]

SL BENFICA

3 [8]

KASHIWA REYSOL

SL BENFICA



12	Samuel Soares	GK
2	Joao Ferreira	DF
3	Alexandre Correia (Cap.)	DF
4	Francisco De Morais	DF
6	Henrique Jocu	MF
8	Gonçalo Ramos	MF
9	Gonçalo Gomes	FW
11	Jair Tavares	FW
13	Rafael De Brito	DF
17	Ronaldo Camara	FW
19	Toagp Gouveia	FW



KASHIWA REYSOL



1	Leo Brian Kokubo	GK
12	Fumiya Unoki	FW
14	Mao Hosoya	FW
19	Hiryu Okuda	FW
20	Keita Ide (Cap.)	DF
22	Hayato Fujimoto	DF
23	Yuusuke Shimizu	MF
28	Sohki Tamura	MF
30	Fumito Okihara	DF
32	Daichi Maeda	DF
34	Shunto Ibi	MF



Leo Brian Kokubo, Kashiwa Reysol
MVP of the Match



"As a team we are confident in our abilities so even when we were two goals behind we had belief in our skills. Even for anyone watching back in Portugal, they saw today the better team didn't make it to the final."

Ronaldo Camara,
SL Benfica



"Before the match we developed a plan to control the match. We had a strong defence and managed to come back after conceding one goal. As a team we worked really hard and are thrilled to have made it to the final."

Keita Ide
Kashiwa Reysol

THE EXPERTS SAY...

Mark Tompkins –
Al Kass Analyst

It was looking like it was going to be a dramatic game today.

Kashiwa was kicking from a right to left direction in the first half of the semifinals.

It was looking solid at the back for Kashiwa, when the match started.

Benfica had the lead, 24 minutes into the game, and later, they had some wonderful

touches throughout the game. The Kashiwa defense looked like they were struggling to open up today.

The goalkeeper was way out of the box, when Kashiwa brought their first goal, 38 minutes into the game.

Nick Summerbee –
Al Kass Analyst

Both teams were knocking up in the air in the second half.

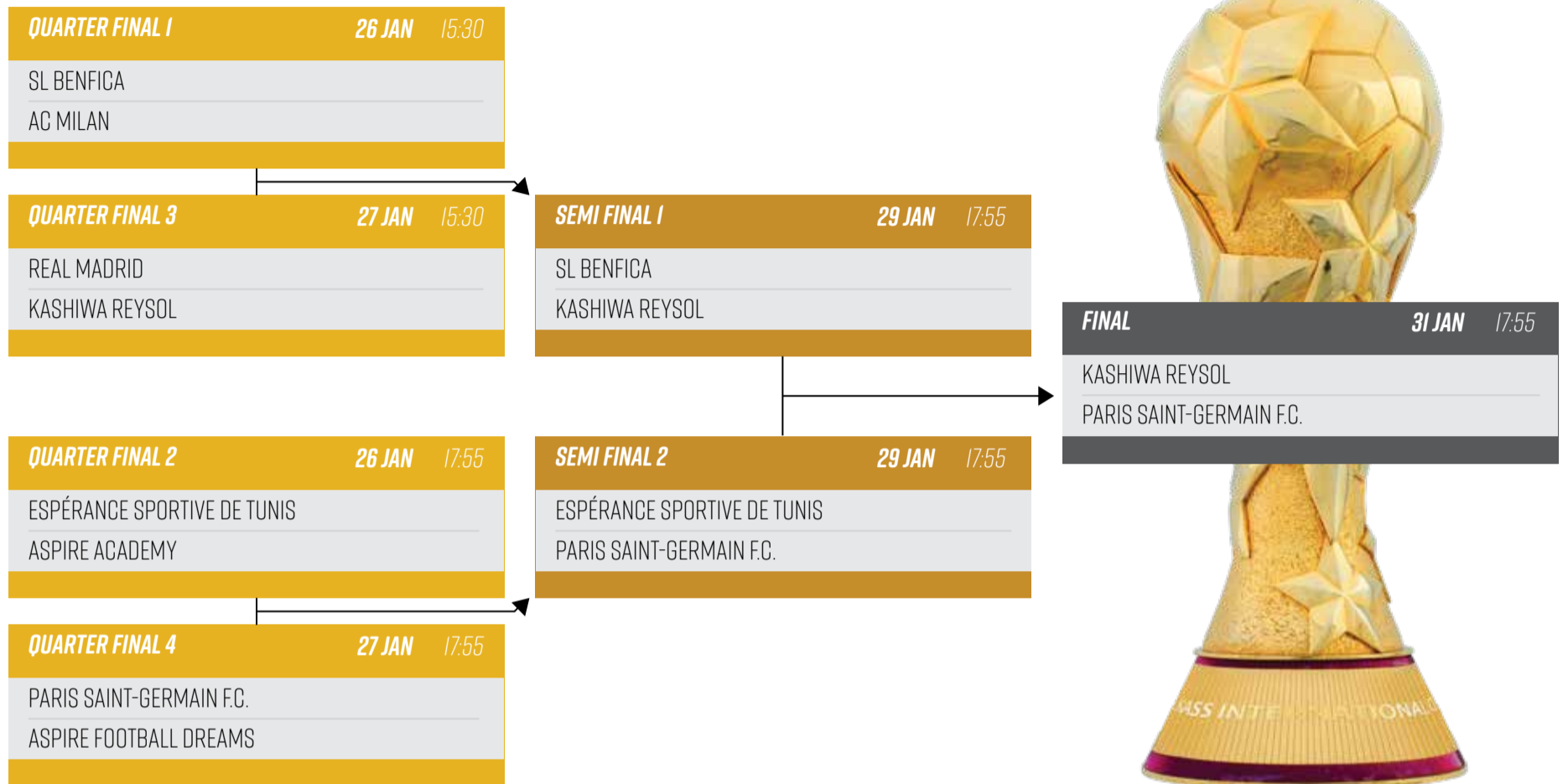
It was once again a great play from Benfica, in the second half. It was a lovely switch in play – Kashiwa was soon leading 2-1, in the second half.

Kashiwa showed us something different in these tournaments – that they are very patient, and that they take chances very carefully.

Benfica was sleeping, when the third goal came in. Forget about who had possession, because it's all about the results.

This is why we love football – because it is unpredictable!

ROAD TO THE CUP



TOP SCORERS



GONÇALO RAMOS
BENFICA

5 GOALS



MAO HOSOYA
KASHIWA REYSOL

5 GOALS

ESPÉRANCE DE TUNIS FANS



TODAY'S MATCHES

TOMORROW'S MATCHES



×



15:30

ASPIRE ACADEMY

AC MILAN



×



15:30

ESPÉRANCE DE TUNIS

SL BENFICA



×



17:55

ASPIRE FOOTBALL DREAMS

REAL MADRID



×



17:55

PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN F.C.

KASHIWA REYSOL



Qatar Petroleum is an integrated national oil corporation responsible for the sustainable development of the oil and gas industry in the State of Qatar. QP's activities encompass the entire spectrum of the oil and gas value chain locally, regionally, and internationally, and include the exploration, production, processing, marketing and sales of oil and gas, liquefied natural gas (LNG), natural gas liquids (NGL), gas to liquids (GTL) products, refined products, petrochemicals, fertilizers, steel and aluminum. QP is committed to contribute to a better future by meeting today's economic needs, while safeguarding our environment and resources for generations to come. Thriving on innovation and excellence, QP is bound to the highest levels of sustainable human, socio-economic, and environmental development.

For more information, please visit www.qp.com.qa



اللجنة العليا
للمشاريع والبرث
Supreme Committee
for Delivery & Legacy

Join us in Delivering Amazing

The Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy (SC) and our stakeholders are designing and constructing the stadiums that will host millions of fans at the 2022 FIFA World Cup Qatar™. Together, we are also planning host country operations for the tournament and ensuring the readiness of all other infrastructure required for its success.

The stadiums, precincts and other infrastructure are an important part of the amazing legacy the SC is delivering. We are also improving the lives and long-term prospects of workers on our projects. Using football as a catalyst for development, we are equipping young people locally and globally with the tools to build better futures for themselves and their communities. We are creating unprecedented opportunities for skills and career development in Qatar and across the Middle East. And we are providing vital support to the innovators and entrepreneurs who will contribute to Qatar's becoming a knowledge-based economy.



www.sc.qa

📍📞📧@roadto2022

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	2	VS	4	Paris Saint-Germain F.C.	15:30	5
	22	SL Benfica	3 (7)	VS	3 (8)	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	Espérance Sportive de Tunis		VS		SL Benfica	15:30	5
FINAL								
Wed 31.01.	26	Paris Saint-Germain F.C.		VS		Kashiwa Reysol	17:55	5

Organizers



Strategic Partner



Platinum Sponsors



Official Partners



Official Medical Partner

Official Sportswear Partner



Official Carrier



Official Hotel



Hospitality Partner



Official Travel Agency



Branding Partner



Technical Partner



Al Kass International Cup