

DAILY NEWS

Thursday 14 February 2019



RANGERS
FLY HIGH
AS ROMA
SQUEEZE BY

RANGERS FC 5/1 KASHIWA REYSOL

ASPIRE ACADEMY 2/2 AS ROMA
PENALTIES 1/4

ALKASS
INTERNATIONAL CUP

RANGERS PRODUCE PERFORMANCE OF TOURNAMENT TO CRUSH KASHIWA

Rangers powered into the final of Al Kass 2019, overpowering Kashiwa Reysol by five goals to one with a performance that combined attacking panache, defensive discipline and total commitment to the cause.

Kashiwa, appearing at the tournament for the fifth year, had slowly grown into the competition. Having snatched a last minute equaliser to PSG, they were second best in a 2-0 reverse to Roma, before delivering a performance of consummate professionalism to knock Real Madrid out.

In a clear sign of Rangers' strength in depth, Christopher McKee was named as one of the substitutes, despite having come off the bench to score a hat-trick in the 7-0 demolition of ESS. Of course, the player he replaced on that occasion – Nathan Young-Coombes – had also scored three, and arguably carried the greatest threat of their potent frontline.

Kashiwa had an early chance when the ball bounced around in the Rangers box before falling to Hayato Tanaka inside the six yard area, but the big defender could not get the ball down quick enough to produce a shot on target.

It was a sign that Reysol had settled first, with the Glasgow side initially struggling to counter their opponents' combative approach. The well-drilled Japanese were content to cede possession to Rangers, keeping all 11 players behind the ball and ready to pounce on rapid counterattacks.

A fascinating tactical battle began ensued, with the Glaswegians looking to get Aaron Lyall on the ball down the right, in the hope that his close control could unlock Reysol's compact defence. However, chances remained at a premium.

With 20 minutes gone, Cole McKinnon went close from distance for the Scots, as



did Kai Kennedy soon after. Both efforts were indicative of the fact that Rangers were having difficulty getting the ball into danger areas, but on 27 minutes McKinnon had a great chance to open the scoring, dispatching a firm header from Young-Coombes' inviting cross that Masato Sasaki did well to tip the ball over.

However, as half time approached, the Reysol keeper was central to a moment of high drama that saw Rangers take the lead. Having gathered the ball, he rolled it short to Daichi Sugawara inside the area, who slipped as he turned to accept possession. Lyall was on the scene in a flash, keeping his composure to slot the ball into an empty net. Suddenly, Rangers were dominant, and Young-Coombes doubled their lead in emphatic fashion moments before the break. Picking up the ball deep in the Reysol half, the powerful forward advanced into the area before hammering a low shot that Sasaki got his hands to but could not keep out.

Kashiwa's carefully crafted game plan lay in tatters, and their disconsolate players trudged off the pitch, only too aware that they had a mountain to climb if they were to reach a second consecutive Al Kass final. From the restart, Reysol immediately attempted to get on the front foot, committing players forward in search of

a way back into the game. But it soon became clear that their efforts were in vain, when Kennedy sped down the left wing before cutting inside and letting fly, his low shot taking a deflection off Fumito Okihara, leaving Sasaki flatfooted and Rangers overjoyed.

A 3-0 deficit was surely too much to overcome, but Reysol coach immediately took action with a double substitution. It was much to his young charges' credit that they stuck to their task as this pulsating tie entered its last quarter.

And, with 12 minutes remaining, substitute Hidetaka Maie graphically illustrated this collective determination when he scored one of the goals of the tournament. Winning possession 40 yards out, the big forward took a few touches before unleashing an unstoppable drive that was still rising as it hit the back of the net.

Rangers' three-goal advantage was restored almost immediately, however, when Kennedy once more tied his marker in knots down the left wing before slamming home into the far corner.

There was still time for a fifth. With the match into added time, Rangers once again targeted Kashiwa's right back, with Charlie Allen reaching the byline before pulling back for fellow-substitute Alex Lowry to apply a first-time finish with the last kick of the match.



X



5

RANGERS FC

1

KASHIWA REYSOL

RANGERS FC

- GK Lewis Kevin BUDINAUCKAS
- DF David Kyle MCCLELLAND (C)
- DF Harris David OCONNOR
- MF Ciaran DICKSON
- MF Kai Alexander KENNEDY
- MF Murray Joseph MILLER
- DF Leon John Phillips THOMSON
- MF Cole MCKINNON
- DF Matthew HENDERSON
- FW Arron John LYALL
- FW Nathan Jay YOUNG COOMBES



KASHIWA REYSOL

- GK Masato SASAKI
- DF Hayato FUJIMOTO
- DF Ibuki TODA (C)
- FW Yuki SHIMIZU
- MF Sohki TAMURA
- DF Fumito OKIHARA
- DF Takuma OTAKE
- MF Naito SAITO
- FW Shun NAKAJIMA
- MF Daichi SUGAWARA
- DF Hayato TANAKA



MAN OF THE MATCH

Kai KENNEDY, Rangers FC
MVP of the Match



THE EXPERTS SAY...

Chris Makin -
Al Kass Analyst

I was blown away by the performance put up by Rangers. They have a good side and have played some good games in the tournament, but I did not expect the level of football they produced against Kashiwa. Kashiwa also has a strong team but it did not work out for them and it went downhill for them after they conceded their first goal.

If you analyze the game, it hardly looked like if they faced any troubles although they were up against a strong team. Even the one goal they conceded was a world-class strike from outside the box.



INSPIRATIONAL ASIAN CUP VICTORY POINTS THE WAY TO 2022

Qatari football is enjoying a golden spell, with the whole country still in ecstasy over the national team's superb success at the Asian Cup. Meanwhile, Aspire Academy's journey deep into the tournament at Al Kass 2019 has provided further evidence of the nation's footballing progress and prowess. Aspire International, a team put together as part of the Aspire Football Dreams project, twice won this trophy and Aspire Academy would love to follow in their footsteps. They did reach the final two years ago but found Real Madrid too strong and succumbed to a 2-0 defeat.

Aspire Academy have played at all eight editions of the Al Kass International Cup. In 2014, one of their players was a certain Akram Afif, now one of the country's leading players and a big influence in Qatar's Asian Cup success, where he produced an amazing 10 assists during the tournament. If any of the current Aspire Academy squad needs inspiration or motivation to fulfill their potential, they should look no further than Afif, who also stars for Al Sadd in the QNB Qatar Stars League. There are nearly four years until the World Cup takes place in Qatar, so there is still time for any of the current Academy squad to feature in 2022. Afif's career has been hugely influenced by Felix Sanchez, the manager who guided Qatar to their greatest ever triumph. The

Spaniard began his coaching career guiding the youth team at Spanish giants Barcelona, his home city, before moving to Qatar, where his coaching career has mirrored Afif's playing career. Beginning at Aspire and then joining the Qatar Under-19 team, Sanchez progressed to the Under 20s, the Under 23s and finally the senior team. The victorious coach returned to Aspire Zone this week to watch the future generation - players who dream of starring at the World Cup in 2022.

Sanchez recalls with a smile: "It was not very long ago that I was on this pitch when I was coaching the Aspire team participating in the Al Kass International Cup. Many of the players I had back then went on to win the Asian Cup recently. This shows that the philosophy behind Aspire Academy is working." Aspire played a huge role in Qatar's Asian Cup success, with seven of the starting line-up that defeated Japan in the final being graduates of the academy, and a further two making substitute appearances. Goalkeeper Saad Al Sheeb, who conceded just one goal all tournament, and Almoez Ali – who broke the Asian Cup goalscoring record – learned their trade at Aspire. Although Aspire played an integral role in Qatar's success, only Afif and Yousef Hassan of the squad that tasted success in the UAE

have played in the Al Kass tournament. Hassan, who plays for Al Gharafa in the QNB Stars League, began as a defender but was converted to a goalkeeper while at Aspire Academy, and along with Afif he went on loan to Qatari-owned Belgian side KAS Eupen for the 2015-16 season.

As well as Afif and Hassan, the Al Kass International Cup has played host to a number of players who have gone on to bigger and better things. PSG, who are ever-present at Al Kass, are also the most successful team in the tournament's history, and their team that edged out Juventus on penalties in the inaugural competition featured the likes of Kingsley Coman, Moussa Dembele and Adrian Rabiot. Lightning-quick Coman, now with Bayern Munich, twice played at Al Kass and reached the final on both occasions, although PSG were edged out by Brazilians Fluminense in 2013. Highly rated midfielder Rabiot is still with PSG, and is currently rumoured to be on the radar of Manchester United. Former French Under 21 international Dembele is now back plying his trade in his homeland with Lyon following a hugely successful spell with Scottish champions Celtic. Tough-tackling defender Presnel Kimpembe was with Coman in the PSG side that finished runners-up at Al Kass in 2013 and he has

carved out a decent career since, being part of the victorious French squad at the 2018 World Cup Finals in Russia. Another Al Kass winner to become a regular first-team player is Brazilian left-back Leo Pele. Within a year of winning the tournament with Fluminense he was playing first-team football, and he remained with the club until the end of 2018 when he joined Sao Paulo for \$3 US million.

Brazilian central defender Marlon played more than 50 times for the first team after helping Fluminense to victory and his form earned a move to Barcelona, but he is now in Italy's Seria A where he is enjoying his first season with Sassuolo.

Left-sided Brazilian Kenedy was another in that successful Fluminense side and he showed plenty of potential when on loan at Newcastle United last season, but the Chelsea player has endured a disappointing campaign this season, having extended his temporary spell with Rafa Benitez's side. Moroccan international right-back Achraf reached the final in 2014 and progressed into Real Madrid's first team where he made nine appearances last season, although he is currently earning more first-team opportunities in the Bundesliga while on loan to Dortmund. Playing alongside Achraf in the Dortmund back four these days is another player who appeared at Al Kass in the same year as his current team-mate - Dan-Axel Zagadou. PSG failed to reach the semi-finals in 2014 but Zagadou has enjoyed a progressive career since and has played for France at several levels.

Spanish international Munir El Hadadi of Sevilla played at the first Al Kass in the first tournament, in the colours of his first club Barcelona. Sandro Ramirez, currently on loan at Real Sociedad from English Premier League side Everton, was also in the Barca side that year, but the Catalans failed to impress.

Marcos Llorente recently scored his first goal for the first team at Barca's great rivals Real Madrid, nearly six years after appearing at Al Kass for Los Blancos. Spanish Under 20 international Oscar Rodriguez is another to join the Real first team squad after playing at Al Kass, and the talented midfielder stood out from the rest with his performances at Aspire in 2015. Two of Zinedine Zidane's sons, Enzo and Luca, also featured for Real at Al Kass, the latter being skipper of the side that lost to Aspire Football Dreams in the 2015 final.

No Italian side has ever won the tournament, but Milan finished third in 2014 when Patrick Cutrone stood out for the Rossoneri. At Al Kass he was described as "an intelligent player with a great technique," and the striker has lived up to that praise by becoming a senior Italian international.

Brazilian's Sao Paulo were runners-up in 2015, beaten on penalties by PSG, and Eder Militao found himself making his first-team debut shortly afterwards. He joined Portuguese side FC Porto last year and made his Brazilian international debut shortly afterwards. English clubs have made a few appearances at Al Kass over the years and Jordan Ibe went on to play more than 40 times for Liverpool's

first team before joining fellow English Premier League side Bournemouth for a club record fee.

Brahim Diaz played for Manchester City in 2014, shortly after joining from Malaga, and he is now back in La Liga after joining Real Madrid, where his dribbling skills are sure to be a hit at the Bernabeu.

A current youngster from Real – Eidur Godjohnsen's son Andri – could be in with a chance of being in Qatar for the 2022 World Cup in the colors of Iceland, but which other great talents might be back playing at the nearby Khalifa International Stadium? Spartak's Moscow's five-goal star Ilya Golyatov or assist king Aslan Mutaliev are promising young Russians; Roma's goalscoring midfielder Ederado Bove has impressed; or maybe one of the Glasgow Rangers players who have excelled could be back in Doha in 2022, such as midfielder Kai Kennedy – who is already involved with the first team at Ibrox – or Nathan Young-Coombes, who has made an instant impression since joining from Chelsea. Sanchez would love to see some of the Aspire players he has watched this week appear at the World Cup, saying: "Aspire is an amazing and unique programme. Players went through a process to be a part of the Asian Cup squad, which shows it is producing results. It can be a model for many academies. We've been very busy lately but I was keen to come to Al Kass. I still try to find time to watch league matches, and I enjoyed coming back to watch the tournament."





Roma became the first Italians to reach the final of the Al Kass International Cup since Juventus in the inaugural tournament in 2012, despite losing their perfect winning record. The Italians seemed to be cruising to their fourth victory of the tournament when going 2-0 up but player of the match Mekki Tombari scored twice in four second-half minutes to earn a draw and set up the tournament's first penalty shoot-out.

Roma made no mistake as they scored with all four of their spot kicks while Italian keeper Pietro Boer pulled off two fine saves to send his side into the final.

Roma should have taken the lead after 18 minutes when Nicola Zalewski put through promising midfielder Tomasso Milanese but he

shot wide, and the same player went close with another effort moments later.

Zalewski gave the Italians the lead with one of the goals of the tournament on 40 minutes. He powered home a right-foot shot and Roma doubled their lead two minutes later when Balideh left a gap at his near post and Mory Bamba fired home from a tight angle. Aspire went close on 61 minutes when Fahad Al-Abdulla's clever backheel found Faisal Azadi and his dipping shot crashed against the bar with Boer well beaten.

The hosts pulled one back on 68 minutes when Tombari was brought down by Alessio Buttaro, and the striker picked himself up to convert the penalty.

He then brought the crowd to life with a spectacular volley three minutes later to bring the scores level and set up an exciting finale.

Roma thought they had gone back in front with 15 minutes to go but Vittorio Agostinelli's headed effort was ruled out for offside.

Both teams pushed for a winner but it remained 2-2 and onto penalties, where Filippo Tripi, Agostinelli, Vincenzo Muteba and Matteo Cancellieri converted for Roma. Faisal Azadi found the net from Aspire's first spot kick but Naif Alhadhrami and Tombari then missed, leaving the Italians celebrating victory.

ASPIRE ACADEMY

GK Yousef BALIDEH
DF Mohamed AIASH
MF Mostafa KADIRA (C)
MF Faisal AZADI
FW Abdulrahman AL-ABDULRAHMAN
FW Mekki TOMBARI
DF Khaled BIN SABAA
DF Muhammad ZIDAN
DF Abdulla AL-SULAITI
MF Fahad AL-ABDULLA
FW Jassem ABDULSALLAM



AS ROMA

GK Pietro BOER
MF Mory BAMBA
MF Edoardo BOVE
DF Alessio BUTTARO
FW Matteo CANCELLIERI
DF Mattia CIUCCI (C)
MF Tommaso Pantaleo MILANESE
DF Samuele SUFFER
DF Matteo TOMASSINI
MF Filippo TRIPI
FW Nicola ZALEWSKI



MAN OF THE MATCH

Mekki TOMBARI,
Aspire Academy
MVP of the Match



THE EXPERTS SAY...

Rhodri Williams –
Al Kass Analyst

This game had the crowd on its feet and was a memorable match. Apart for the first 10-15 minutes, Roma were dominant the first half. They were in total control and you knew that sooner or later they would score, and they finally scored two goals and got a decent advantage.

Everyone was thinking what could Aspire Academy do in the second half, and they came with an incredible comeback. Especially that second goal by Mekki Tombari, I have not seen a better goal than that in this year's tournament. I am having a hard time remembering a goal as good as this one.



MATCH SCORE	   	
	2 [1]	2 [4]
	ASPIRE ACADEMY	AS ROMA

ROAD TO THE CUP

QUARTER FINAL 1	10 FEB	16:35
RANGERS FC		
ÉTOILE SPORTIVE DU SAHEL		
QUARTER FINAL 4	11 FEB	19:00
REAL MADRID CF		
KASHIWA REYSOL		
QUARTER FINAL 2	10 FEB	19:00
ALTINORDU FK		
ASPIRE ACADEMY		
QUARTER FINAL 3	11 FEB	16:35
AS ROMA		
FC SPARTAK MOSCOW		
SEMI FINAL 1	13 FEB	16:35
RANGERS FC		
KASHIWA REYSOL		
SEMI FINAL 2	13 FEB	19:00
ASPIRE ACADEMY		
AS ROMA		



TOP SCORERS



17

ILYA GOLYATOV

FC SPARTAK MOSCOW

FW

5

GOALS



20

NATHAN YOUNG COOMBES

RANGERS FC

FW

4

GOALS



6

EDOARDO BOVE

AS ROMA

MF

3

GOALS



Glasgow Rangers and AS Roma will go head-to-head in the final of the Al Kass International Cup on Friday after knocking out Kashiwa Reysol and Aspire Academy respectively in the semi-finals.

Rangers stormed into the final with a comprehensive 5-1 victory but Roma required penalties to end Aspire's brave bid, the hosts battling back from 2-0 down to force a 2-2 draw.

Rangers recorded the biggest win in Alkass history when destroying Etoile Sportive Du Sahel 7-0 in the quarter-finals, and they continued their free-scoring form after a tight start.

Kashiwa are a difficult side to break down and it took Rangers until the 37th minute to open the scoring, and it came courtesy of the most bizarre goal of the tournament.

Keeper Masato Sasaki rolled the ball out to Daichi Sugaware, but he slipped and Arron Lyall nipped in to score. Nathan Young-Coombes' low shot on 43 minutes gave Rangers a 2-0 goal half-time advantage and the Scots continued to impress after the break with Kai Kennedy (2) and Alexander Lowry adding further goals, with Hidetaka Maie grabbing a consolation for Kashiwa. The second semi-final also came to life towards the end of the first half when Roma

scored twice in the space of three minutes through Nicola Zalwski and Mory Bamba.

Man of the match Mekki Tombari then produced a two-goal burst of his own, earning and converting a spot-kick after 68 minutes and then equalizing with a spectacular volley three minutes later to set up the tournament's first penalty decider. Roma converted all four of their kicks while Roma keeper Pietro Boer pulled off two fine saves as the Italians went through 4-1 on penalties.

TODAY'S MATCHES

ESS

15:00

ESS

ALTINORDU

ALTINORDU FK

REAL MADRID

17:45

REAL MADRID

SPARTAK MOSCOW

SPARTAK MOSCOW

Al Kass International Cup

Qatar

الوعد ٢٠٢٢
See you in 2022

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See You in 2022

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GAMES SCHEDULE

GROUP STAGE							
GROUP A		GROUP B		GROUP C		GROUP D	
	Aspire Academy		Paris Saint Germain FC		FC Bayern München		Real Madrid CF
	Rangers FC		AS Roma		Altinordu FK		FC Spartak Moscow
	Raja Club Athletic		Kashiwa Reysol		Etoile Sportive Du Sahel		Suwon Samsung F.C
DATE	NO.	TEAMS		TIME	VENUE		
Mon. 4 Feb	1	Paris Saint Germain FC	1-1	Kashiwa Reysol	16:35	5	
	2	Aspire Academy	0-1	Raja Club Athletic	18:45	5	
Tue. 5 Feb	3	FC Bayern München	2-3	Etoile Sportive Du Sahel	16:35	4	
	4	FC Spartak Moscow	2-3	Real Madrid CF	18:45	4	
Wed. 6 Feb	5	Raja Club Athletic	0-3	Rangers FC	16:35	5	
	6	AS Roma	5-2	Paris Saint Germain FC	18:45	5	
Thu. 7 Feb	7	Altinordu FK	1-0	Etoile Sportive Du Sahel	16:35	4	
	8	Real Madrid CF	1-1	Suwon Samsung F.C	18:45	4	
Fri. 8 Feb	9	Aspire Academy	3-1	Rangers FC	16:35	5	
	10	Kashiwa Reysol	0-2	AS Roma	18:45	5	
Sat. 9 Feb	11	FC Bayern München	1-1	Altinordu FK	16:35	4	
	12	Suwon Samsung F.C	1-3	FC Spartak Moscow	18:45	4	
POSITIONS 9 - 12							
Sun. 10 Feb	13	Raja Club Athletic	0-2	FC Bayern München	16:35	4	
	14	Suwon Samsung F.C	4-5	Paris Saint Germain FC	19:00	4	
QUARTER FINALS							
Sun. 10 Feb	15	Rangers FC	7-0	Etoile Sportive Du Sahel	16:35	5	
	16	Altinordu FK	0-1	Aspire Academy	19:00	5	
Mon. 11 Feb	17	AS Roma	3-0	FC Spartak Moscow	16:35	5	
	18	Real Madrid CF	0-2	Kashiwa Reysol	19:00	5	
PLAY OFFS POSITIONS 8 - 5							
Tue. 12 Feb	19	Etoile Sportive Du Sahel	0-3	Real Madrid CF	16:35	4	
	20	Altinordu FK	1-2	FC Spartak Moscow	19:00	4	
SEMI FINALS							
Wed. 13 Feb	21	Rangers FC	5-1	Kashiwa Reysol	16:35	5	
	22	Aspire Academy	2-2 (1-4)	AS Roma	19:00	5	
PLAY OFFS POSITIONS 8 - 5							
Thu. 14 Feb	23	Etoile Sportive Du Sahel	VS	Altinordu FK	15:00	4	
	24	Real Madrid CF		FC Spartak Moscow	17:45	4	
POSITIONS 3 - 4 & GRAND FINAL							
Fri. 15 Feb	25	Kashiwa Reysol	VS	Aspire Academy	15:00	5	
	26	Rangers FC		AS Roma	17:45	5	