AFC U17 ASIAN CUP
SAUDI ARABIA 2026™

# TECHNICAL REPORT



AFC U17 ASIAN CUP AFC U17 ASIAN CUP AFC U17 ASIAN CUP AFC U17 ASIAN CUP

# CONTENTS


03 MESSAGE FROM THE AFC PRESIDENT

04 INTRODUCTION OF U17 ASIAN CUP

05 COMPETITION OVERVIEW

17 WINNING COACH

21 TECHNICAL TOPICS

25 GOALSCORING ANALYSIS

30 TALKING POINTS

33 AWARDS

35 PLAYERS TO WATCH

40 TEAM PROFILE

49 RESULTS

52 REFEREEING

56 EXTRA TIME

61 AFC COMMITTEES

64 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS






## MESSAGE FROM THE
# AFC PRESIDENT

*Dear friends and colleagues,*

It is a great pleasure to present the Technical Report for the AFC U17 Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2026™, which serves as a vibrant showcase of the immense talent and undeniable potential flourishing within our Continent's youth ranks.

The AFC remains dedicated to creating an ideal environment for our stars of tomorrow to thrive, and I am pleased to have witnessed such exceptional proficiency and competitive drive throughout the tournament. These performances reflect the remarkable progress of the development initiatives led by our Member Associations (MAs), as we continue to elevate the profile of Asian football on the global stage.

Once again, I offer my warmest congratulations to Japan on securing a record-extending fifth title. Their 3–2 victory was a testament to their remarkable consistency, while the performance of China PR as runners-up signalled a triumphant return to the top tier of Asian youth football.

Beyond the podium, this edition was defined by landmark breakthroughs. We are immensely proud of the eight Asian teams that will join hosts Qatar at the FIFA U-17 World Cup in November this year. Among this elite group, we celebrate Vietnam for making history with their first-ever qualification for the global showpiece. Alongside them, China PR ended an absence spanning more than two decades, joining Australia, Korea Republic, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and hosts Qatar to form a formidable Asian contingent on the world stage.

The tournament was a clear display of high energy and ambition from the opening whistle to the final match. A total of 91 goals were scored across the 28 matches played—averaging 3.25 per game—providing fans with a dynamic and engaging spectacle. To capture these moments, this review offers a comprehensive analysis of the trends, strategies, and performance metrics that defined the competition.

These pages explore everything from sophisticated transition play to the increasing importance of high-press systems, serving as a vital blueprint for coaches and technical directors. Our goal is to ensure Asia remains a leading force in global youth development while fostering a culture of excellence across the Continent and my sincere thanks go to the AFC Technical Observers Team for their diligent work in compiling this valuable resource.

The Referees' assessment is also included in this document, providing an essential analysis of officiating standards. The combination of technical data and refereeing insights offers our MAs a holistic view of the tournament's modern demands. Such a comprehensive approach ensures that both players and officials continue to develop in alignment with world-class standards.

This commitment to excellence was equally reflected in the seamless organisation of the event. On behalf of the AFC, I express my sincere gratitude to the Local Organising Committee and the Saudi Arabian Football Federation for their exceptional hospitality and for providing the perfect stage for such a remarkable tournament.

Furthermore, I place on record my deep appreciation to the AFC Technical Committee, the AFC Competitions Committee, and the AFC Referees Committee, whose contributions are vital in ensuring that the AFC remains at the forefront of technical and officiating development. I must also thank our commercial partners, broadcasters, and sponsors, whose trust and confidence continue to drive the growth of our youth competitions.

The future of Asian football remains incredibly bright, and even as we document their progress in this report, I look forward to seeing our rising stars continue their ascension with distinction and pride.

**Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa**
AFC President

# INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION INTRODUCTION




This was the 21st edition of a competition which, since its launch in 1985, has alternated between U16 and U17 denominations. As it had been in 2025, the final tournament was staged in Saudi Arabia. But, in organisational terms, it was not a repeat performance. Whereas four stadiums with considerable capacities had been used as the venues in 2025, the event was re-designed as a Grassroots Festival at the King Abdullah Sports City in Jeddah, using three pitches within the complex for 19 of the 28 matches and staging the other nine – including the two Semi-finals and the Final at the Hall Stadium Legends. Four other pitches within the complex were reserved for training sessions.

The 16 participants were initially divided into four-team groups. However, the late withdrawal of DPR Korea converted Group D into a three-team section, thus reducing the match schedule from 31 to 28 fixtures – and, inevitably, affecting some of the tournament's facts and figures. It meant that Australia had one week between their two Group D matches, while Uzbekistan did not open their title defence until Matchday 2. The top two in each group progressed to the Quarter-finals and also qualified for the FIFA U-17 World Cup to be played in Qatar during a four-week period spanning November and December 2026. The qualifiers were Japan, China PR, Uzbekistan, Australia, Korea Republic, Vietnam, Tajikistan and, as the sole representative from the West, Saudi Arabia. The ongoing conflict in the Middle East affected some teams' pre-tournament plans.

The starting grid in Saudi Arabia featured the eight Member Associations who had represented the AFC at the FIFA event in 2025, along with the seven group winners from the Qualifiers (Australia, China PR, India, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, and Yemen). All kick-off times were in the evening to avoid the peak periods of heat and humidity. During the Knockout Stage, any game where scores were level after 90 minutes went directly to a penalty shoot-out – an eventuality which occurred in two games involving Uzbekistan.

Four of the 15 technicians at the tournament were non-native, including China PR's Japanese head coach Bin Ukishima. The other three were European, from Germany, Portugal and Spain. Unusually, the Final featured two coaches from Japan. In terms of squad rotation and player development, the coaches used 264 of the 280 substitutions available to them.

With the AFC's Head of Coach Education Wim Koevermans wearing the captain's armband, the Technical Observer Team at the final tournament was formed by Nihad KH S Souqar (Jordan), Toshev Usmon (Uzbekistan) and Mohammed Eid Aldushashi (Saudi Arabia).




# COMPETITION OVERVIEW

COMPETITION OVERVIEW



# AFC U17 ASIAN CUP SAUDI ARABIA 2026™

The AFC U17 Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2026™ was held from May 5 to 22, 2026.

Matches were played at Jeddah's King Abdullah Sports City Hall Stadium and its surrounding venues, with Japan defeating China PR 3-2 in the Final to claim a fifth crown.

The Quarter-finalists also confirmed their tickets to the FIFA U-17 World Cup Qatar 2026 and the AFC U17 Asian Cup Uzbekistan 2027™.



# GROUP STAGE GROUP STAGE GROUP STAGE

## GROUP A

Saudi Arabia and Tajikistan advanced to the Quarter-finals from Group A, with both teams finishing on seven points.

Saudi Arabia topped the group on goal difference, defeating Myanmar (4-0) and Thailand (2-0) before playing out an exciting 5-5 draw with Tajikistan, who defeated Thailand (2-0) and Myanmar (1-0) in their earlier ties.







## GROUP B

Japan were imperious in Group B, concluding their campaign with three wins.

The four-time champions came from behind to beat Qatar (3-1), with subsequent wins against China PR (2-1) and Indonesia (3-1) sealing the group top spot.

China PR advanced as the runners-up, with their 2-0 defeat of Qatar on Matchday Three enough for them to go through on superior head-to-head goal difference.





# GROUP STAGE GROUP STAGE GROUP STAGE





## GROUP C

Vietnam sealed a historic qualification to the FIFA U-17 World Cup by finishing top of Group C.

The Southeast Asian side edged Yemen 1-0 in their opening match but then suffered a 4-1 setback against Korea Republic, who came from behind to seal the emphatic win.

A thrilling 3-2 defeat of the United Arab Emirates, however, sealed the top spot after Korea Republic were held 0-0 by Yemen in their concluding tie.

The East Asian side also advanced on five points, having opened their campaign with a 1-1 draw with the UAE.





## GROUP D

Defending champions Uzbekistan cruised to the Group D top spot with emphatic wins against India and Australia.

India were defeated 3-0, while Australia were brushed aside with a 2-0 victory.

Australia also advanced, courtesy of their 4-0 triumph against India in their opening clash.







# QUARTER-FINALS

# QUARTER-FINALS QUARTER-FINALS QUARTER-FINALS

## JAPAN 5-0 TAJIKISTAN

Japan led from start to finish as they defeated Tajikistan 5-0 in their Quarter-final.

The opening goal, however, only came in the 42nd minute when Sora Iwatsuchi played a superb through ball for Maki Kitahara to smash a low shot into the bottom corner.

With Tajikistan reduced to 10 players following Hikmatullo Kabirov's red card in the 54th minute, Japan took advantage of their numerical superiority to extend their advantage on the hour mark, with Kitahara dancing into the box and sending a low shot beyond goalkeeper Abubakr Rahmonqulov.

Kakeru Saito was next to get in on the goalscoring act, giving Maktoum Alidodov the slip inside the box to slide home Rekuto Shiraogawa's cross from the left flank in the 69th minute.

Another Shiraogawa delivery from the left picked out Tafuku Satomi at the far post in the 79th minute to sidefoot in before a third assist from the former presented Eito Takaki with a simple tap-in in the 90th minute to seal an impressive Japan win.





## SAUDI ARABIA 1-3 CHINA PR

China PR came from behind to stun Saudi Arabia 3-1 in their Quarter-final.

Both teams jostled for early control, but it was Saudi Arabia who went ahead in the 21st minute when Ammar Maimani drove into the box on the left before slipping a neat through ball for Faisal Bayomi to convert from close range.

Saudi Arabia's lead lasted only six minutes as Kuang Zhaolei found Wan Xiang inside the box, with the Red Star Belgrade midfielder turning past his marker before slotting the ball into the bottom left corner.

The momentum shifted in favour of China PR after the break with Saudi Arabia goalkeeper Abdullah Al Mas having to parry Shuai Weihao's powerful drive from inside the area in the 51st minute before denying the forward from close range, with Zhao Songyuan then seeing his headed attempt sail over the bar.





China PR's aggression paid off eight minutes later with He Sifan nodding a cross into the path of Zhao, who reacted quickest inside the six-yard-box to finish past the onrushing Al Mas from close range.

Progression to the Semi-finals was sealed in added time with He dribbling past two players before unleashing a powerful drive from distance, which saw the ball hit the underside of the bar before crossing the line.

# QUARTER-FINALS QUARTER-FINALS QUARTER-FINALS

## UZBEKISTAN 2-2 KOREA REPUBLIC
### (UZBEKISTAN WON 5-3 ON PENALTIES)

Uzbekistan overcame Korea Republic 5-3 on penalties, with substitute goalkeeper Mehrojbek Sirojiddinov emerging as their hero in the shootout by denying Park Kyung-hoon's spot-kick after the match had ended 2-2.

Korea Republic took the lead in the 22nd minute when an unmarked Moon Ji-hwan collected a loose ball in the centre of the area and fired beyond Uzbekistan goalkeeper Olimjon Shamuratov.

Uzbekistan fought back and drew level in the 41st minute when Korea Republic goalkeeper Moon Yu-no failed to properly handle a lobbed back-pass from Nam Ian, with Akhrorbek Ravshanbekov robbing the custodian and slotting into an empty goalmouth.

Ravshanbekov struck his second goal two minutes into added time when he burst down the right, evaded three defenders, and sent a perfectly weighted shot from the edge of the area that dropped into the top right corner beyond an outstretched Moon.

Korea Republic forced the tie to penalties with their equaliser in the 88th minute when An Sun-hyun, picking up a pass from skipper Choi Min-jun, curled the ball from the edge of the area past a rooted Shamuratov.





Sirojiddinov came on for Shamuratov just before the final whistle, with the substitution proving to be a masterstroke as he stopped Park's penalty to take Uzbekistan through.





## VIETNAM 0-3 AUSTRALIA

Australia produced a dominant performance to defeat Vietnam 3-0 in their Quarter-final.

After both sides exchanged opportunities, the deadlock was broken with four minutes to play in the first half when Vietnam failed to clear an Australia long throw, allowing Henrique Oliveira to head the ball to Oliver O'Carroll, who just couldn't miss from close range.

The second came in the 60th minute, when Max Court's long punt forward was expertly controlled by Georgio Hassarati, who then squeezed the ball home from an acute angle.

Australia confirmed the win in the 75th minute when substitute Akeem Gerald cut in from the right flank and exchanged passes with Court, before placing the ball in the corner to seal a first Semi-final appearance since 2018.



# SEMI-FINALS

## JAPAN 1-1 UZBEKISTAN
### (JAPAN WON 3-2 ON PENALTIES)

Goalkeeper Kosei Oshita starred as Japan edged defending champions Uzbekistan 3-2 on penalties after their Semi-final had ended 1-1.

Uzbekistan took the lead in the 26th minute after Chimezie Kai Ezemuokwe felled Akhrorbek Ravshanbekov inside the area, with Asilbek Aliev sending Oshita the wrong way from the penalty spot.

Japan struggled to find their way back into the tie, with the four-time champions yet to register a shot on target as the tie entered added time at the end of the second half.

A moment of brilliance in the final seconds, however, saw captain Anthony Motosuna float the ball perfectly for Ezemuokwe to slot home the equaliser and take the tie to penalties.

In the shootout, Oshita denied Muhammad Hakimov and Mirjamol Anvarov, with Japan taking a 2-0 lead. Mashkhyrbek Abdusoliev sent his strike against the crossbar but subsequent misses from Takeshi Wada and Tafuku Satomi allowed Uzbekistan back into the game.

Motosuna, however, was ice cold as he stepped up, making no mistake in sending Japan into the Final.











# SEMI-FINALS SEMI-FINALS SEMI-FINALS

## CHINA PR 2-0 AUSTRALIA

China PR turned on the power in the second half to defeat Australia 2-0 in their Semi-final.

After an evenly contested first half, China PR broke the deadlock five minutes after the restart when Zhou Yunuo dispossessed Oliver O'Carroll and threaded the ball to Shuai Weihao, who finished his bursting run down the middle with an easy finish.

Substitute Xie Jin sent the China PR fans into raptures after scoring in the first minute of stoppage time when he pounced on a loose ball inside the box before slotting home to fire his nation into a first Final since 2004.









# FINAL

# FINAL FINAL FINAL FINAL FINAL FINAL FINAL FINAL



## CHINA PR 2-3 JAPAN

Japan had to stave off a second-half fightback from China PR to emerge champions with a 3-2 win in the Final at the King Abdullah Sports City Hall Stadium Legends.

The trophy was lifted for a record-extending fifth time after Japan survived a scare, with China PR fighting back from 3-0 down to come within a whisker of pulling off a sensational comeback.

China PR frustrated Japan with their tight man-marking, but the breakthrough finally came in the 31st minute as Tafuku Satomi collected Takeshi Wada's pass before cutting into the right side of the box and drilling a low shot into the bottom left corner.

Japan's high pressing broke China PR again in the 42nd minute after Wada collected a loose ball and freed Kakeru Saito inside the box, with the latter beating goalkeeper Qin Ziniu with a deft touch before slotting home.

China PR were again caught in transition in the second minute of stoppage time with Wada setting up Maki Kitahara, who finished with a composed strike into the bottom right corner from just above the area to take his personal tally to six goals.

China PR refused to give up and reduced the deficit three minutes into the second half after Shuai Weihao surged down the right flank before threading the ball to Wan Xiang, who finished with a delicate chip over Japan custodian Kosei Oshita.

China PR's sustained pressure earned them a penalty in the 77th minute after Anthony Motosuna brought down Zhao Songyuan, who converted the ensuing spot-kick.
That set the stage for a grandstand finish with Japan goalkeeper Oshita tipping over Zhao's stoppage-time header to seal the title for his side.

Oshita was named the Best Goalkeeper of the tournament, and teammate Kitahara claimed the Most Valuable Player and Top Goalscorer awards, while Saudi Arabia took home the Fair Play Award.




# WINNING COACH

# COMPETITION MAKES ONO'S TEAM STRONGER



Victories for Japan in the two AFC age-limit tournaments for men played in 2026 renewed the applause for the well-structured and highly competitive youth league system across the country's 47 prefectures, with the 24-team JFA U-18 Premier League at the peak of the development pyramid. And this is where Shingi Ono was recruited at the end of 2024 to take the reins of the U17 national team.

He had caught the eye after becoming, in 2022, head coach of the U18s at Yokohama FC – the club where he had played 236 games in midfield. "We first need to make sure we stay in this league," he had said when he led the team in the Premier League for the first time. "This is the highest-level environment in Japanese youth football and, if we truly want to test ourselves and help our players grow, we have to remain on this stage." The team managed to remain – and conquer, winning its first Premier League title in 2024. And, while he was there, he explained his philosophy. "Since moving into youth development," he said, "I have learned that teaching football alone is not enough. Coaching is ultimately about encouraging players to act on their own initiative, and we as coaches must properly recognise and evaluate those actions. I always try to adjust my coaching according to each player's characteristics and personality. That approach has been influenced by many coaches and managers I experienced during my playing career."

Ono also maintained that self-questioning forms part of his repertoire. "I try not to believe too strongly that my own coaching is always right. At that moment, I deliver my ideas believing they are correct but, afterwards, I always reflect on whether they truly were. I also try to ensure that team tactics never suppress individuality. I want players to express themselves freely, while still understanding when discipline is required."

# WINNING COACH WINNING COACH





He carried his belief in guided learning into the final tournament in Jeddah – as he illustrated during the half-time interval in the Quarter-final against Tajikistan, when Japan were leading 1-0. “Although we were controlling the game to some extent, I told the players that, personally, I felt that something was missing. I said ‘what do you think?’ And the players agreed. We then discussed two main points: improving our transitions and increasing the speed and intent of the passes before the decisive pass.” Japan won 5-0.

Tactical challenges apart, the tournament tested mental resilience and emotional intelligence – notably in the Semi-final against Uzbekistan when Japan were moments away from elimination. Prior to the first game against Qatar, he had commented “As this is both the opening game of the tournament and the first official match for this team, the psychological aspect may become even more important than technical, tactical, or physical factors. If players become too emotional or overexcited, things can quickly go wrong. I told the players that excitement and nervousness are natural, but the key is how well they can stay calm and composed.”

In true Japanese fashion, Ono rotated his squad to offer maximal development opportunities, making eight changes for the second fixture against China PR. “The players who came into the starting line-up,” he remarked afterwards, “clearly had the motivation to prove themselves, but perhaps they tried a little too hard at times.” In the two games against China PR, he fielded 17 of his 20 outfielders, making six changes in his starting line-up for the Final compared with the Group Stage encounter.

For Ono, each match represented a valuable exposure to tournament football and another gradient on the learning curve – especially the narrow escape in the Semi-final. “In the first half, we were overwhelmed by the Uzbekistan team,” he admitted, “but in the second half we changed our mindset and started to play our football. That was the biggest positive. And winning this game will give the players confidence.”

# WINNING COACH WINNING COACH

Then came the Final when, after a mature and composed first half, his team was clearly rattled by the China PR goal almost immediately after the restart. “We had talked about how important the start of the second half would be,” he said afterwards, “but that early goal completely changed the flow of the game. In the end, we were able to win, but there were clear issues that we need to address. However, I think it was a very valuable match – something that can serve as important material for us moving forward. In terms of controlling the game, that early goal was a very big and painful setback. With the FIFA U-17 World Cup coming later this year, it was important that we managed to win difficult matches like this. I want to take that positively moving forward, improving and working towards playing better matches where we can perform more consistently and maintain our level for the full 90 minutes. As soon as we return to Japan, I want to start watching players again, and I hope new talents will emerge. A new competition begins from here – and competition makes the team stronger. Without competition, players cannot improve. I hope we can build a high-level competitive environment before the FIFA U-17 World Cup.”










# TECHNICAL TOPICS

TECHNICAL TOPICS

"I believe there has been major progress in tactical understanding among Asian players. Many teams showed a higher level of tactical awareness, better understanding of game phases, and improved ability to apply coaching concepts and tactical structures during matches. This development has helped reduce the gap between many Asian teams and created a more competitive environment overall, even though some differences between certain teams still remain." The comment by Saudi Arabia's head coach Ahmed Al-Hanfoosh succinctly sketches the outlines of a tournament which showcased the diversity in Asian football at U17 level.

Among the differences, he highlighted, "one of the noticeable challenges during the tournament was the physical difference between certain teams due to natural physical and athletic variations between regions. There were clear physical differences between teams such as Australia, Uzbekistan, and China PR compared to some other teams such as India and Myanmar. In this age category, physical development can have a significant impact on player performance and match intensity." The AFC Technical Observers in Jeddah cited the match between Korea Republic and Yemen (the only goalless draw of the tournament) as an example of the visible maturity gaps at the U17 level. While the Yemeni squad contained 16 players born in 2010 or 2011, Korea Republic, along with Uzbekistan, exclusively selected players born in 2009. The latter was the preferred strategy, with the squads of seven other MAs featuring 20 or more who were born at the top end of the age bracket.



## PHYSIQUE AND TECHNIQUE

Despite the evident discrepancy in physical maturity, Yemen enjoyed a greater share of possession during the second half, injecting anxiety factors into the performance of a Korea Republic side aware that defeat would spell elimination and no World Cup. Their ratio of long passing increased to 19% - their highest during a tournament where they and Saudi Arabia were alone in dominating possession in every match. The Technical Observers wondered whether it was time to downgrade the relevance of ball-possession statistics and focus more on passing accuracy or the efficiency of finishing. Runners-up China PR, they pointed out, had a greater share of the ball in only two of their six matches but showed "significant progress in skill and speed with more skilful, tactically adept players compared to teams of the past". Their Japanese coach Bin Ukishima commented "reaching the final was positive for Chinese football as a whole, but this is the result of long-term work by many coaches and people involved in player development across the country."

In terms of efficient finishing, the observers' doubts were fuelled by statistics. India, for example, went home goalless after their two games had yielded four on-target shots from 20 attempts. Qatar totalled four accurate finishes in three matches; Indonesia eight from 29. Even the top teams struggled to find consistency in this aspect of the game. Australia troubled the China PR goalkeeper twice (from 10 attempts) during the Semi-final. China PR once from five when they met Japan in the Group Stage. And Japan's last-gasp equaliser in the Semi-final against Uzbekistan was their only on-target effort in the match, while the defending champions totalled four from 12. The observers wondered, at a time when goalscoring tends to be more evenly shared around the team rather than the exclusive terrain of specialists, whether enough training-ground time is dedicated to the specialised art of finishing.



The desire to use possession-play to build from the back was almost unanimous at the tournament in Jeddah, although there were frequent cases of defenders being panicked into hitting a long ball or situations where a brief sequence of short passes at the back was followed by a long delivery towards the target striker. Some teams switched into more of risk-management mode after initial mistakes during the build-up phase. Some of the errors were costly. Myanmar, back in the final tournament after a 20-year absence, conceded a second goal in their opening match when Saudi Arabia exerted a high press on a goal kick. The 5-5 draw between the hosts and Tajikistan was marked by inopportune lapses, some of them seemingly due to overconfidence on the ball. And, at the top end of the competition, China PR, pressing high during the first half, took the lead in the Semi-final when Australia lost possession in a critical area – but were then caught out themselves in the Final when Japan exploited an error in the Chinese build-up to take a 2-0 lead.

While top teams such as Japan, Korea Republic or Saudi Arabia felt comfortable about playing out of the high press, other teams struggled to retain possession. Or rather, other players did, emphasising that development work on this facet is about individual technique and ability to find passing solutions in tight spaces.

## THE ART OF HITTING BACK

Errors in the build-up phase prompted swift responses from advanced areas during a tournament where 20% of the open-play goals could be attributed to counterattacking. Only two of the successes, on the other hand, stemmed from classic back-to-front counters – one of them the second of three combination goals scored by Korea Republic during the late comeback against Vietnam. "Goalkeepers generally played a limited role in initiating counterattacks and rarely looked upfield for the chance to launch a long pass," the Technical Observers noted. Although Uzbekistan impressively set out to counterattack Japan from positions deep in their own half during the Semi-final, the majority of successful counters were collective responses to ball-winning in midfield, with several players immediately pushing forward. In the Final, Japan's third goal and China PR's response just after the break provided telling examples.



## TALLER, STRONGER - AND BETTER

Although they may have let counterattacking opportunities slip, goalkeepers' performances exceeded expectations at a development stage where shortcomings are generally exposed – and fairly frequent. "Apart from being taller and stronger," Nihad Souqar commented, "they were generally more influential in the game, reflecting the impact of increased focus on goalkeeper coach education promoted by the AFC Technical Department." The Observers agreed that, in comparison with previous years, there was a marked improvement in technical abilities, particularly in terms of playing the ball under pressure, covering space behind high back lines and confidently participating in build-up phases.

## DEFENSIVE TRANSITIONS

"Many of the teams left themselves exposed to counterattacks by committing too many players forward," the Technical Observers commented, suggesting there is work to be done on the art of countering the counter – organising defensive strategy while the team is in attacking mode. Nihad Souqar remarked "most teams set out to win the ball back immediately after losing it. But sometimes the movements to pressurise the ball-carrier and cut off the short-passing options were disorganised and stretched the team structure out of shape." The most common result, the Observers added, was excessive space between the midfield and defensive lines – especially during the second half when fatigue began to set in – and opposing front players found it easier to drop into spaces where they could receive and turn.

The quality of passing in the opposition's half of the pitch meant that, inevitably, some teams were required to effect attack-to-defence transitions more than others. For coaches at development levels, the topic is a frequent talking point. On the one hand, opposition territory is where creative, risk-taking passing is more than acceptable. On the other hand, consistent losses of possession put pressure on



transition play. Pass completion rates in this area of the pitch varied considerably. Japan's ranged from 56% to 74%; Korea Republic's from 58% to 72%; Uzbekistan's from 54% to 73%; Australia's from 68% to 74%; and China PR's from 50% to 67% until Japan reduced their success rate to 40% in the Final. Against the champions, Qatar and Tajikistan posted completion rates of 32% and 34% respectively in Japanese territory – meaning that two out of three passes offered their opponents transition opportunities or went out of play.

TECHNICAL TOPICS

## THE GOALSCORING WINGER

The tournament's 91 goals were shared among 63 different players. Only four scored more than two goals and the leading goalscorers, with six and four respectively, were Japan's Maki Kitahara, a left-side attacker (who also won the AFC's Most Valuable Player award) and Uzbekistan's Akhrorbek Ravshanbekov, a right winger who, according to his head coach Sergey Chigodaev, "showed quality and personality in big moments and has a very good future ahead of him". The two wide players provided 11% of the tournament's goals.

Mohammed Eid Aldushashi commented "the use of inverted wingers was almost a tournament norm and the Uzbekistan No.19 was a good example of a fast, skilful winger who was effective in cutting inside and looking to score goals." The tournament illustrated the trend towards wide players who are good with both feet and the changing role of central strikers, who are no longer regarded solely as 'goal machines'. The observers reported that the sight of a striker stationary in the box waiting for crosses to be delivered was increasingly rare. In general, the front men were expected to drop deep or drift wide to be more greatly involved in approach work – and then to appear in the box when a cross seemed imminent.

At the same time, the tendency towards the inward-running inverted winger encouraged a switch towards low deliveries from the wide areas, as opposed to the traditional high cross from the touchline. In the 28 matches, only three open-play goals were headers – well, four if we include Japan's added-time goal in the Semi-final against Uzbekistan when a defender accidentally diverted the ball onto the head of Chimezie Ezemuokwe, one of the two centre-backs sent upfield by Shingi Ono in a last-ditch attempt to equalise. Curiously, the other three headed goals were scored against Qatar – two by Japan and one by China PR. The trend towards low crossing was illustrated in Japan's Quarter-final against Tajikistan when three of the champions' five goals stemmed from low deliveries driven in from the left.







## THE LAST WORDS

Going back to where we started, Saudi Arabia head coach Ahmed Al-Hanfoosh can claim the first and the last words. "I believe there has been clear development in the overall level of Asian football at youth level," he maintained, "especially in tactical awareness and game understanding. Many teams demonstrated organised structures, improved tactical discipline, and better execution of different game phases. Now, one of the most important points for the development of Asian national teams is increasing the quality and competitiveness of international tournaments and friendly matches. Continuous exposure to high-level competition is essential for accelerating player development."



# GOALSCORING ANALYSIS

# GOALSCORING ANALYSIS

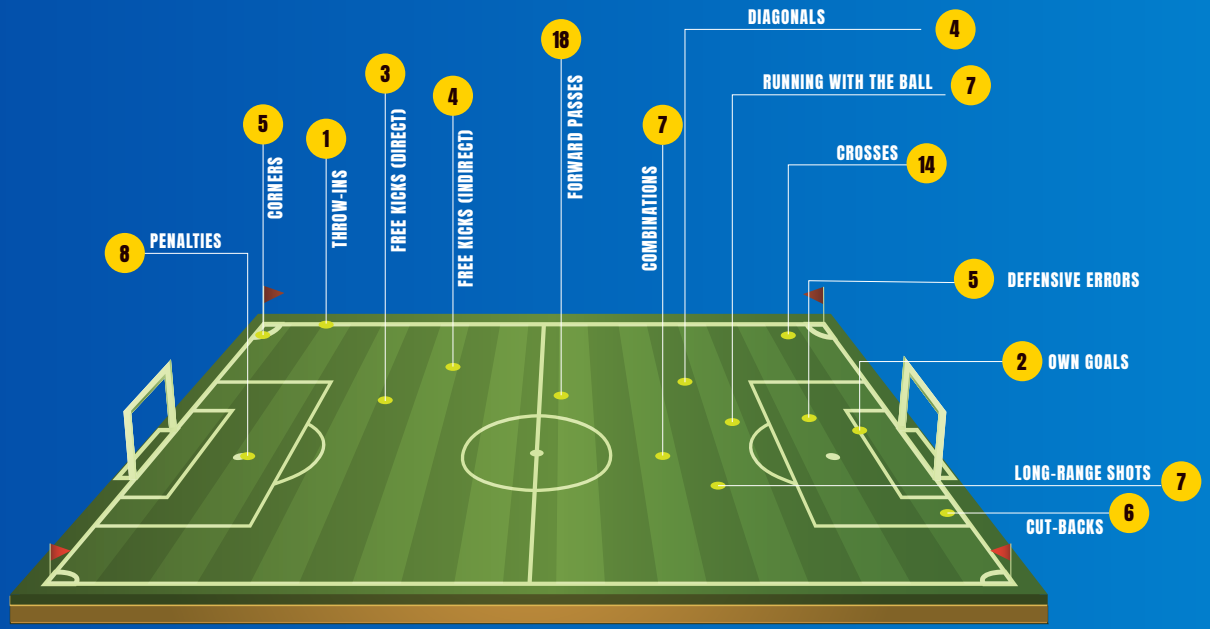
GOALSCORING ANALYSIS

## VARIETY IS THE SPICE OF ATTACKING

Although the goalscoring total fell by 10% in relation to the 2025 tournament, the fact that there were three fewer fixtures meant that the average per game remained almost identical: 3.25 in 2026; 3.26 in the previous year. The pattern, however, was unusual. Despite the 10-goal draw between Saudi Arabia and Tajikistan on Matchday 3, the Group Stage produced 66 goals at 3.14 per match and the 25 goals in seven Knockout Stage ties at the most competitive end of the event were responsible for enhancing the overall average. Japan (17), Saudi Arabia (12) and China PR (10) accounted for 43% of the total. In 13 of the 28 fixtures, both teams scored and the widest margin of victory was Japan's 5-0 win against Tajikistan in the Quarter-finals.

In terms of goal attempts, Uzbekistan set the pace with an average of 18.5 per game, followed by Japan (16.8), Saudi Arabia (14.5), Australia and Korea Republic (both 13.5). Runners-up China PR posted 12.8 whereas, at the other end of the scale, the averages of Myanmar and Qatar failed to reach five. The accuracy of finishing compared relatively favourably with other AFC competitions. The ratio of on-target goal attempts was 1:2.66 – in other words, three out of eight were well-directed. Of the on-target attempts, one in 2.82 resulted in a goal. Almost one quarter (23%) hit the net after the 75th minute – 15 in normal time and six timed at 90+. Korea Republic contributed heavily to this particular statistic. Although 1-0 down to Vietnam until the 84th minute, Kim Hyun-jun's side won 4-1.

The goalscoring graphics break down the tournament's 91 goals into 14 set-play and open-play categories.




## GOALS FROM SET PLAY

| ACTION | GUIDELINES | GOALS |
|---|---|---|
| Corners | Directly / indirectly from a corner | 5 |
| Free kicks (direct) | Direct from a free kick | 3 |
| Free kicks (indirect) | Indirectly from a free kick | 4 |
| Penalties | Spot kicks, including rebounds | 8 |
| Throw-ins | Following a throw-in | 1 |

**TOTAL GOALS SCORED : 91**

## GOALS FROM OPEN PLAY

| ACTION | GUIDELINES | GOALS |
|---|---|---|
| Combinations | Combination moves involving 2/3/4 players | 7 |
| Crosses | Crosses from the wing | 14 |
| Cut-backs | Pass back from the bye-line | 6 |
| Diagonals | Diagonal passes into the penalty box | 4 |
| Running with the ball | Dribbling and finishing or providing an assist | 7 |
| Long-range shots | Shots from outside the penalty box including rebounds | 7 |
| Forward passes | Penetrating or aerial passes | 18 |
| Defensive errors | Bad back-pass / mistake by the goalkeeper | 5 |
| Own goals | Players scoring against their own team | 2 |

# GOALSCORING ANALYSIS

GOALSCORING ANALYSIS

## SET PLAYS

In 2025, 30% of the goals had been derived from dead-ball situations so, on the face of it, the 23% in 2026 hints at a significant downturn. Closer examination, however, reveals that the shortfall can be traced exclusively to penalty kicks. The previous years' event had produced a disquieting total of 16 in 31 games. In 2026, this total was halved. The total of eight, incidentally, includes the first of Saudi Arabia's two spot-kicks against Myanmar when Htet Wai Yan made a save, only for the taker, Faris Bu Shaqraa, to turn in the rebound. Penalties apart, set plays provided 13 goals – one fewer than in the two previous final tournaments.

Goals with their origins in corner kicks were surprisingly rare. So rare that they could be enumerated one by one. A left-footed delivery from the right allowed defender Marwan Al-Yami to head Saudi Arabia's first against Thailand. A header by defender Ali Al-Magdi from an identical delivery brought Yemen level at 1-1 against UAE. Another inswinger from the right gave Uzbekistan a 2-0 lead over India. Defender Anthony Motosuna put Japan 1-0 ahead in the Group B fixture against China PR. And a header by another defender, Nguyen Manh Cuong, gave Vietnam a 3-2 win against UAE – and the top spot in Group C. In other words, strikers and midfielders drew a blank.

This added up to five successes from 301 corners at a rate of 1:60 – a figure which recalled the eyebrow-raising 1:61 at the last senior AFC Asian Cup™. But such a startling difference, with the 1.37 at the U17 event in 2025, means that the topic warrants a mention in the Talking Points section.



The pick of the three goals from direct free kicks was arguably the left-footed strike from very wide on the right (not far from the corner flag) by Indonesia's Peres Akwila against Japan. The other two involved Vietnam. Midfielder Chu Ngoc Nguyen Luc brought Cristiano Roland's team back to 1-1 by curling in a free kick from the edge of the box. But it was An Sun-hyun's free kick which triggered the avalanche of late goals when they were defeated 4-1 by Korea Republic. Two of the four goals from indirect free kicks were scored in the high-scoring draw between the hosts and Tajikistan.

The renaissance of the long throw as an attacking weapon was confirmed at the U17 tournament – and provided Australia's opening goal in the Quarter-final against Vietnam, with Oliver O'Carroll putting the finishing touch to a move initiated by a long throw from the right.

The bottom line, however, is that only 14% of the tournament's goals were created by rehearsed dead-ball situations and that, penalties excluded, five teams travelled home from Jeddah without having exploited dead-ball situations.

# GOALSCORING ANALYSIS GOALSCORING ANALYSIS

## OPEN PLAY

The numbers look pretty similar. Compared with 71 open-play goals in 2025, there were 70 in 2026, when three fewer games were played. But the pattern revealed a shift towards a broader variety of attacking pathways. The goals were more evenly shared between wing play and penetration through more central zones.

Approach work in the wide areas was still productive, with the joint total of crosses, cut-backs and diagonals into the box adding up to just over one-third of open-play successes (34.3% to be precise). Japan remained faithful to their trademark combination play on the flanks, leading to firmly-struck crosses into the box – a formula that generated five of their goals, including the low crosses driven towards the far post which created all three of their goals against Indonesia. China PR, when 1-0 behind against Saudi Arabia, turned the Quarter-final around with two variations on crossing: firstly, the low delivery from the right by Kuang Zhaolei that allowed Wan Xiang to turn and finish; secondly, the high cross from the left headed back from the far post for Zhao Songyuan to score. And Australia provided a prime example of a line-breaking diagonal when Max Court set up Georgio Hassarati's goal that put them 2-0 ahead in the Quarter-final against Vietnam.



The novelty, however, was that forward passes created more goals than crosses – none more crucial than the through ball that created Chimezie Ezemuokwe's 90+7 equaliser in Japan's Semi-final against Uzbekistan. Although ultimately less successful, it was the through pass to Wan Xiang just after the break that turned the psychological tide in favour of China PR in the Final against Japan when, in the first half, after a high regain, Takeshi Wada's through pass had allowed Kakeru Saito to put 2-0 on the scoreboard. And the excellent through pass by Muhammadjon Karomatullozoda allowed Parviz Sanginov to score a morale-boosting fourth goal for Tajikistan as they fought back from 4-1 down to draw with the hosts.

The top teams also featured players who were prepared to run at defenders (and goalkeepers). Such as Japan's Maki Kitahara, whose run through the left channel sealed the 3-1 victory over Qatar. Or the solo run by He Sifan that clinched China PR's Quarter-final win against Saudi Arabia. Two of Qatar's three goals in the tournament were solo runs by Ayokunle Tokode and Dhiaeddine Larbi during the second half against Indonesia.

Long-range shooting supplied 10% of the open-play goals and the percentages of long-distance efforts among the eight FIFA World Cup qualifiers ranged from 44% (Australia and Korea Republic) to China PR's 30%, while 38% of champions Japan's goal attempts were from outside the box. One of them – the long distance strike by Maki Kitahara that put them 3-0 up in the Final – ultimately decided the title. Another decisive and spectacular success from long range was the last of the 10 goals in Tajikistan's 5-5 draw with the hosts, when Mukhammadzhon Mirakhmadov deftly flicked the ball off the ground and volleyed it into the roof of the net from a central position well outside the penalty area.



One of the regular talking points in AFC competitions has been the dearth of goals created by combination play, and, after the 2025 tournament had once again rung alarm bells with one success in 31 matches, the 2026 event heralded something of a resurgence by providing 10% of the open-play tally. Korea Republic were the main protagonists in this chapter, thanks to the last – and very late – three goals in their 4-1 win against Vietnam. The trio of successful combination moves included a classic back-to-front counterattack, which allowed Ahn Joo-wan to make it 3-1 on the scoreboard. Australia, Japan, Thailand and UAE registered one successful combination move apiece. But the last word in this chapter was that the other 10 contestants failed to score from combination play.

Finally, the seven goals attributable to defensive errors or own goals were seen by the Technical Observers as a creditable statistic among players at this early stage of development and a healthy symptom of risk-management awareness.

# TOP GOALS

TOP GOALS TOP GOALS TOP GOALS




| Match | Teams | Goal | Action |
|---|---|---|---|
| 13 | UAE-YEM | 1-1 | Corner + Header |
| 13 | UAE-YEM | 2-2 | Free kick + Header |
| 15 | JPN-IDN | 2-1 | Direct free kick in at far post |
| 17 | KSA-TJK | 5-3 | Free kick + Header + Header |
| 21 | VIE-UAE | 1-1 | Direct free kick in right corner |




| Match | Teams | Goal |
|---|---|---|
| 12 | VIE-KOR | 1-3 |
| 13 | UAE-YEM | 2-3 |
| 16 | CHN-QAT | 2-0 |
| 17 | KSA-TJK | 2-0 |
| 17 | KSA-TJK | 5-4 |
| 17 | KSA-TJK | 5-5 |
| 21 | VIE-UAE | 2-2 |
| 23 | KSA-CHN | 1-3 |
| 24 | UZB-KOR | 2-1 |
| 25 | VIE-AUS | 0-3 |



# TALKING POINTS

# TALKING POINTS

TALKING POINTS TALKING POINTS



## THE CASE FOR THE DEFENCE?

As the Technical Topics section mentions, it was a tournament that put defensive abilities to the test. “The 1v1 defensive situations were challenging,” Nihad Souqar reflected, “particularly against the skilful wingers who could successfully navigate into the box.” The remark prompted debate on defensive aspects such as the shortfalls in covering spaces when centre-backs moved forward with the ball or 1v1 defensive skills in areas outside compact central blocks. Discussion led to questions and talking points. At elite youth levels, is there an overemphasis on physical training? Is priority given to attacking aspects such as build-up play and individual dribbling or shooting abilities? Are defensive qualities like positioning, 1v1 ability or anticipation less developed? If we calibrate how training-ground time is distributed, what percentage of the work is dedicated to attacking aspects and how much to education in defensive tasks? What do you think the percentages should be?

## FESTIVAL FEEDBACK

The coaches in Jeddah gave a thumbs-up to the innovative festival format. The set-up at the King Abdullah Sports City created a tournament environment that was new to players and coaches alike, with travel times for training drastically reduced and staggered kick-off times that made it easy to walk from one match to another. And, from a coaching perspective, some novel questions were raised.

The new scenario, for example, meant that, with single-camera coverage of matches, the implementation of VAR technology disappeared from the agenda. Opinions were divided. Some thought this was a pity. Others felt that the absence of VAR reviews boosted the flow of the game. What do you think?





By the way – and it might be difficult to prove that it was related – the actual playing time, which had been a major talking point in 2025, was much less of one in 2026. During the previous tournament in Uzbekistan, only one of the 31 fixtures (Afghanistan v Indonesia) had produced an actual playing time in excess of 60 minutes. In Saudi Arabia, this happened at seven of the 28 matches – peaking at 64mins 28secs during the Vietnam v Australia Quarter-final. In seven of the 2025 games, the ball had been rolling for less than 50 minutes. In Jeddah, this only happened twice: Japan v Qatar and Saudi Arabia v Thailand.

Going back to the King Abdullah Sports City, the general feeling was that the use of adjacent pitches helped to create a better atmosphere, with small crowds populating small spaces instead of being scattered in more grandiose venues. And, as nine of the 15 participants were going to compete in similar settings at the Aspire complex during the FIFA World Cup, it could be argued that this was better preparation. Was anything lost by not playing in a big stadium?

# TALKING POINTS

TALKING POINTS TALKING POINTS

There was a degree of privacy at the training pitches but the ability to walk from one pitch to another within the complex promoted contact between the teams – and made it much easier to assess future opponents. Does this have an impact? Was it coincidence that, by the time the tournament reached the Knockout Rounds, the only set-play goal – penalties apart – was from Australia's long throw against Vietnam? From a coaching perspective, does it suggest that 'private' aspects such as rehearsal of set-play mechanisms might be better done prior to the tournament?

## AN AGE-OLD QUESTION?

This might be a discussion point among the Technical Observers and the editorial team. Do you stop talking about a topic because you've mentioned it several times before? Or do you keep it in full view on the debating table?

The issue is quite simple. Of the 345 players on show at the final tournament, 41 had birthdays in the last three months of the calendar year. The squads of Australia and Thailand included none. The two finalists, China PR and Japan, had one each. So did the United Arab Emirates. The question is the usual one: what can be done to prevent talented players with potential from slipping through the net simply because they were born at the 'wrong' end of the year?










# AWARDS

# AWARDS

AWARDS AWARDS AWARDS AWARDS



## MOST VALUABLE PLAYER & TOP GOAL SCORER

NO.10 | MAKI KITAHARA (JPN)



## BEST GOALKEEPER

NO.1 | KOSEI OSHITA (JPN)

## AFC FAIR PLAY AWARD : SAUDI ARABIA



# PLAYERS TO WATCH

# PLAYERS TO WATCH PLAYERS TO WATCH

## GOALKEEPERS



NO.1
**KOSEI OSHITA**
**JAPAN**



NO.1
**OLIMJON SHAMURATOV**
**UZBEKISTAN**



NO. 1
**QIN ZINIU**
**CHINA PR**

# PLAYERS TO WATCH PLAYERS TO WATCH

## DEFENDERS



NO.3
**ANTHONY MOTOSUNA**
**JAPAN**



NO.4
**MUHAMMAD KHAKIMOV**
**UZBEKISTAN**



NO.4
**LI JUNPENG**
**CHINA PR**



NO.5
**MILES MILLINER**
**AUSTRALIA**



NO.20
**CHOI MIN-JUN**
**KOREA REPUBLIC**



NO.16
**KAZATO KIMURA**
**JAPAN**

# PLAYERS TO WATCH PLAYERS TO WATCH

## MIDFIELDERS



NO.6
**SORA IWATSUCHI**
**JAPAN**



NO.6
**ZHOU YUNUO**
**CHINA PR**



NO.6
**SAJJAD NASIRI**
**AUSTRALIA**



NO.6
**JUNG HA-WON**
**KOREA REPUBLIC**



NO.8
**TAKESHI WADA**
**JAPAN**



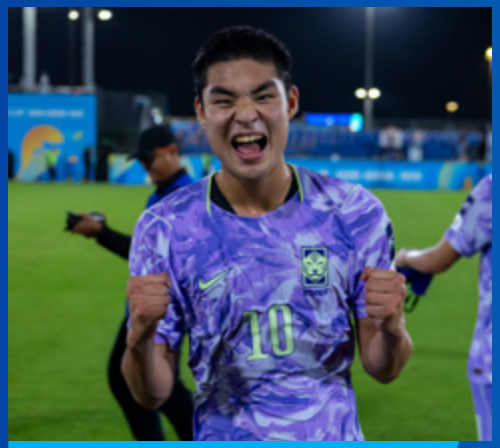
NO.10
**WAN XIANG**
**CHINA PR**

# PLAYERS TO WATCH PLAYERS TO WATCH

## FORWARDS



NO.7
**AHN JU-WAN**
**KOREA REPUBLIC**



NO.10
**KIM JI-WOO**
**KOREA REPUBLIC**



NO.10
**ABDULLAH ALDAWSARI**
**SAUDI ARABIA**



NO.10
**MAKI KITAHARA**
**JAPAN**



NO.11
**KAKERU SAITO**
**JAPAN**



NO.11
**SHUAI WEIHAO**
**CHINA PR**



NO.14
**ZHAO SONGYUAN**
**CHINA PR**



NO.23
**YAHYA SAEED**
**SAUDI ARABIA**



# TEAM PROFILES

# TEAM PROFILES TEAM PROFILES TEAM PROFILES

## AUSTRALIA

| SQUAD | | DATE OF BIRTH | Position |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | CHARLIE WILSON-PAPPS | 13-09-2009 | Goalkeeper |
| 2 | WINSTON ASHBURNER | 02-02-2009 | Defender |
| 3 | BESIAN KUTLESHI | 28-02-2009 | Defender |
| 4 | MARCUS SAVIC | 21-03-2009 | Defender |
| 5 | MILES MILLINER | 10-08-2009 | Defender |
| 6 | SAJJAD NASIRI | 03-02-2009 | Midfielder |
| 7 | ASTON REID | 02-04-2009 | Midfielder |
| 8 | OLIVER O'CARROLL | 16-05-2009 | Midfielder |
| 9 | LUKE BECVINOVSKI | 04-05-2009 | Forward |
| 10 | AKOL AKON | 21-05-2009 | Forward |
| 11 | MAX COURT | 16-01-2009 | Forward |
| 12 | LACHLAN ALLEN | 04-04-2009 | Goalkeeper |
| 13 | ARCHIE MITCHELL | 06-05-2009 | Defender |
| 14 | FRASER BROWN | 29-08-2009 | Defender |
| 15 | EMILE KATRIB | 17-07-2009 | Defender |
| 16 | AKEEM GERALD | 01-02-2010 | Forward |
| 17 | HENRIQUE OLIVEIRA | 17-01-2009 | Forward |
| 18 | HUGO NG | 03-01-2009 | Goalkeeper |
| 19 | STEVAN RUJAK | 27-08-2009 | Defender |
| 20 | GEORGIO HASSARATI | 03-03-2009 | Forward |
| 21 | LUKA DEMUTH | 24-01-2010 | Midfielder |
| 22 | HARRISON BOND | 19-01-2009 | Defender |
| 23 | COREY DA CRUZ | 24-04-2009 | Midfielder |

### KEY PLAYERS

| | |
|---|---|
| 6 | SAJJAD NASIRI |
| 9 | LUKE BECVINOVSKI |
| 11 | MAX COURT |



### STYLE OF PLAY

High-intensity, physically dominant football with aggressive pressing, direct attacks, and strong wing play

### ATTACKING AND TRANSITION TO DEFEND

1-4-3-3

- Building up from GK to flanks and central
- Constructive build up by midfielder no.6
- Wingers cut inside midfield
- High tempo combination play through the center
- Immediate pressure on the ball after ball loss

### DEFENDING AND TRANSITION TO ATTACK

1-4-1-4-1

- Compact aggressive defending, high on the pitch
- In own half compact and pressure on the ball
- Quick transition at times

### COACH — CARL VEART (AUS)



A former Socceroo between 1992 and 2000, Carl Veart enjoyed a distinguished playing career that included spells with Sheffield United, Crystal Palace and Millwall in England. He also made over 250 appearances for Adelaide City across five stints, scoring more than 80 goals. The striker also turned out for Adelaide United, scoring their first-ever goal in 2003 before going on to net the first goal in A-League history in 2005.

After hanging up his boots, Veart began his coaching career in 2008 with United's age-group teams and rose through the ranks. Having played in their first-ever AFC Champions League™ campaign in 2007, Veart returned to the competition as assistant coach in 2010 and eventually took charge of the senior side from 2020 to 2025. The 56-year-old was appointed head coach of Australia's U17 national team in 2025 and the Joeys reached the last four of the AFC U17 Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2026™ to qualify for the FIFA U-17 World Cup for the first time since 2019.



TEAM PROFILES TEAM PROFILES

# CHINA PR

| SQUAD | | DATE OF BIRTH | Position |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | QIN ZINIU | 10-07-2009 | Goalkeeper |
| 2 | JIN YUCHENG | 15-06-2009 | Defender |
| 3 | NAN ZIXUN | 23-03-2009 | Defender |
| 4 | LI JUNPENG | 19-02-2009 | Defender |
| 5 | ZHANG XUYAO | 22-03-2009 | Defender |
| 6 | ZHOU YUNUO | 26-02-2009 | Midfielder |
| 7 | HE SIFAN | 14-01-2009 | Midfielder |
| 8 | KUANG ZHAOLEI | 13-03-2009 | Midfielder |
| 9 | XIE JIN | 21-08-2009 | Midfielder |
| 10 | WAN XIANG | 21-04-2009 | Midfielder |
| 11 | SHUAI WEIHAO | 05-01-2009 | Forward |
| 12 | JIANG CHENGEN | 02-05-2010 | Goalkeeper |
| 13 | WANG HEYI | 17-06-2009 | Midfielder |
| 14 | ZHAO SONGYUAN | 07-04-2009 | Forward |
| 15 | PAN CHAOWEI | 25-02-2010 | Midfielder |
| 16 | WANG XIUHAO | 21-01-2009 | Defender |
| 17 | XU ZHENGPENG | 15-03-2009 | Midfielder |
| 18 | BIAN WEIHAO | 15-02-2009 | Defender |
| 19 | PENG XIANCHEN | 06-01-2010 | Midfielder |
| 20 | ZHANG BOLIN | 30-12-2009 | Forward |
| 21 | KONG XINUO | 22-05-2009 | Midfielder |
| 22 | LIU ZHICHENG | 28-03-2009 | Defender |
| 23 | ZHU YUXUAN | 13-07-2009 | Goalkeeper |

## KEY PLAYERS

| | |
|---|---|
| 6 | ZHOU YUNUO |
| 10 | WAN XIANG |
| 14 | ZHAO SONGYUAN |



## STYLE OF PLAY

Compact, disciplined football built on defensive organization and fast, efficient attacks.

## ATTACKING AND TRANSITION TO DEFEND

1-4-3-3 / 1-4-2-3-1

- Assured build up from the back
- No.6 in midfield dropping off to get on the ball
- Good combination between striker and attacking midfielder
- Good / quick combination play

## DEFENDING AND TRANSITION TO ATTACK

1-4-5-1

- High pressure on building up opponent
- At times dropping off in own half
- Well organized aggressive defending
- Team keeps the ball after regaining possession, or quick forward when possible

## COACH

BIN UKISHIMA (JPN)



Since hanging up his boots, Japan's Bin Ukishima has taken on a variety of coaching roles with youth teams across several Japanese clubs, including Yokohama FC and Shonan Bellmare, before being appointed head coach of the latter's senior side in 2019 and helping them retain their J1 League status.

The former defender joined the China PR national team setup in 2024 and oversaw their impressive AFC U17 Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2026™ qualifying campaign that finished with wins in all five games and no goals conceded. The 58-year-old then guided them to their first final since 2004, where they were edged 3-2 by Japan to end their quest for a third crown; their performance also secured a seventh FIFA U-17 World Cup involvement – their first since 2005.



# JAPAN

| SQUAD | | DATE OF BIRTH | Position |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | KOSEI OSHITA | 07-08-2009 | Goalkeeper |
| 2 | YUTO IWASHITA | 20-02-2009 | Defender |
| 3 | ANTHONY UDEMBA MOTOSUNA | 10-03-2009 | Defender |
| 4 | YUZO TAKEUCHI | 27-05-2010 | Defender |
| 5 | SOSUKE HOSHI | 03-03-2009 | Midfielder |
| 6 | SORA IWATSUCHI | 01-05-2009 | Midfielder |
| 7 | KAIJI CHONAN | 07-04-2009 | Midfielder |
| 8 | TAKESHI WADA | 05-06-2009 | Midfielder |
| 9 | EITO TAKAKI | 08-08-2009 | Forward |
| 10 | MAKI KITAHARA | 07-07-2009 | Midfielder |
| 11 | KAKERU SAITO | 23-02-2009 | Forward |
| 12 | RENTO KIDA | 25-05-2010 | Goalkeeper |
| 13 | CHIMEZIE EZEMUOKWE | 02-04-2009 | Defender |
| 14 | TAFUKU SATOMI | 20-04-2009 | Midfielder |
| 15 | RYOMA TSUNEYOSHI | 12-02-2009 | Midfielder |
| 16 | KAZATO KIMURA | 16-09-2009 | Midfielder |
| 17 | YOSHIKI FUJIMOTO | 02-04-2009 | Midfielder |
| 18 | REKUTO SHIRAOGAWA | 11-01-2009 | Midfielder |
| 19 | SHUN TATEMI | 02-02-2009 | Midfielder |
| 20 | YOSHITO KUMADA | 05-09-2009 | Defender |
| 21 | ARATA OKAMOTO | 16-12-2009 | Midfielder |
| 22 | KOKI KURAHASHI | 05-07-2009 | Defender |
| 23 | KOKI TAKAHASHI | 28-02-2009 | Goalkeeper |

## KEY PLAYERS

| | |
|---|---|
| 10 | MAKI KITAHARA |
| 8 | TAKESHI WADA |
| 1 | KOSEI OSHITA |



## STYLE OF PLAY

Technical, possession-based football with coordinated pressing and relentless movement off the ball.

## ATTACKING AND TRANSITION TO DEFEND

1-3-4-3

- Ensure a secured build up from goalkeeper and defenders
- Central MF drop back to receive the ball and link up with the strikers
- Wing players move inside to overload the midfield
- Utilize both central and wing attacks
- After losing the ball immediate well-organized counter pressing

## DEFENDING AND TRANSITION TO ATTACK

1-5-2-3/1-5-4-1

- High pressure on build up opponent
- At times compact in own half
- Aggressive pressure on the ball
- Immediate fast forward after gaining possession

## COACH

SHINGI ONO (JPN)



A midfielder during his playing career, Shingi Ono notably made 236 league appearances for Yokohama FC between 1999 and 2005 before retiring in 2009 after his stint with Giravanz Kitakyushu, where he also began his coaching journey.

The Tokyo native then spent a decade climbing through the ranks at Yokohama FC before joining the Japan national team setup in December 2024. The 52-year-old subsequently took charge of the U16 and U17 sides, and led the young Samurai Blue to a record-extending fifth AFC U17 Asian Cup™ title in May 2026.



# KOREA REPUBLIC

| | SQUAD | DATE OF BIRTH | Position |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | JANG JUNYEONG | 27-08-2009 | Goalkeeper |
| 2 | PARK JIHU | 23-01-2009 | Defender |
| 3 | CHOI JAEHYEOK | 04-11-2009 | Defender |
| 4 | SEONG MINSU | 05-02-2009 | Defender |
| 5 | CHOI GEONMIN | 16-11-2009 | Defender |
| 6 | JUNG HAWON | 30-03-2009 | Midfielder |
| 7 | ANN JUWAN | 14-04-2009 | Midfielder |
| 8 | HAN SEUNGMIN | 09-11-2009 | Midfielder |
| 9 | NAM IAN | 03-01-2009 | Forward |
| 10 | KIM JIWOO | 02-01-2009 | Forward |
| 11 | KIM JIHO | 18-01-2009 | Forward |
| 12 | LEE SEUNGHWA | 20-03-2009 | Goalkeeper |
| 13 | LIM YUNHO | 13-06-2009 | Defender |
| 14 | AHN SUNHYUN | 05-09-2009 | Midfielder |
| 15 | NAMKOONG JUN | 07-01-2009 | Defender |
| 16 | MOON JIHWAN | 04-05-2009 | Midfielder |
| 17 | KOO HUNMIN | 24-04-2009 | Midfielder |
| 18 | PARK KYUNGHOON | 08-03-2009 | Midfielder |
| 19 | KANG MUSUNG | 29-03-2009 | Defender |
| 20 | CHOI MINJUN | 15-04-2009 | Defender |
| 21 | MOON YUNO | 15-12-2009 | Goalkeeper |
| 22 | LEE INWOO | 02-06-2009 | Midfielder |
| 23 | KIM TAEHO | 29-01-2009 | Midfielder |

## KEY PLAYERS

| | |
|---|---|
| 7 | ANN JUWAN |
| 20 | CHOI MINJUN |
| 6 | JUNG HAWON |



## STYLE OF PLAY

Aggressive, organized football built on pressing, athleticism, and quick forward attacks.

## ATTACKING AND TRANSITION TO DEFEND

1-4-3-3/1-3-4-3

- Constructive build up play, both full backs in attacking role
- Combination play through central midfield to strikers
- Good wing play, good crosses
- Excellent passing game
- Immediate organized aggressive pressure on the ball after ball loss

## DEFENDING AND TRANSITION TO ATTACK

1-4-4-2

- Aggressive compact defending
- Quick forward movement after winning the ball

## COACH

KIM HYUN-JUN (KOR)



Kim Hyun-jun built his identity as a youth coach through Korea Republic's university football system, including at Yeungnam University, before stepping into the professional game with Gangwon FC, where he served as assistant coach from 2019 to 2021 and also had a brief spell as interim head coach.

After undergoing training in Bayern Munich's youth coaching development programme in 2023, he joined the Korea Republic U17 national team coaching staff as assistant coach in 2024 before taking over as head coach in 2026. The 42-year-old led his side to the Quarter-finals of the AFC U17 Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2026™, where they were edged out by Uzbekistan on penalties.



# SAUDI ARABIA

| | SQUAD | DATE OF BIRTH | Position |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | MOUSA ALEID | 20-04-2009 | Goalkeeper |
| 2 | ABDULRAHMAN ALMAMI | 10-02-2010 | Defender |
| 3 | AHMAD MOHAMMAD ISHAK | 01-11-2009 | Defender |
| 4 | NAWAF ALHUWAYRI | 06-01-2009 | Defender |
| 5 | ALI ALYAHYA | 07-05-2009 | Defender |
| 6 | KHALID SHARAHILI | 29-08-2009 | Midfielder |
| 7 | ALI AWADH | 28-02-2009 | Midfielder |
| 8 | HASSAN ALOKRUSH | 06-02-2009 | Midfielder |
| 9 | FARIS BU SHAQRAA | 18-07-2009 | Forward |
| 10 | ABDULLAH ALDAWSARI | 26-03-2009 | Midfielder |
| 11 | ALI MAKKI | 03-09-2009 | Midfielder |
| 12 | MARWAN ALYAMI | 02-01-2009 | Defender |
| 13 | AMMAR MAIMANI | 16-07-2009 | Defender |
| 14 | TAMEEM SIRAJ | 17-08-2009 | Midfielder |
| 15 | ALI ALSHAMRANI | 17-03-2009 | Forward |
| 16 | FAISAL ALAA | 13-09-2009 | Forward |
| 17 | JAWAD ALHASHEM | 08-02-2009 | Defender |
| 18 | ABDULLAH ALBATLI | 20-10-2009 | Midfielder |
| 19 | ZAID ALBURI | 11-01-2009 | Defender |
| 20 | HAMAD ALSHAMMARI | 20-09-2009 | Midfielder |
| 21 | ABDULLAH ALMAS | 18-02-2010 | Goalkeeper |
| 22 | MUSAAD ALSHAMMARI | 23-02-2009 | Goalkeeper |
| 23 | YAHYA AHMED | 27-06-2009 | Midfielder |

## KEY PLAYERS

| | |
|---|---|
| 10 | ABDULLAH ALDAWSARI |
| 11 | ALI MAKKI |



## STYLE OF PLAY

Attack-minded, technically fluid football with quick combinations and aggressive transitions

## ATTACKING AND TRANSITION TO DEFEND

1-3-4-3 / 1-2-3-5

- Build up from GK low tempo
- At times good switch of play
- Direct at the opponent's goal, individual attempts
- Quick retreat in own half applying pressure at the same time.

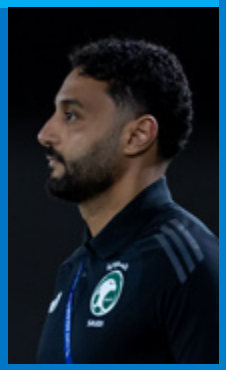
## DEFENDING AND TRANSITION TO ATTACK

1-4-5-1

- Drop off in own half
- Quick forward movement after regaining possession
- Individual attempts

## COACH

AHMED AL-HANFOOSH (KSA)



Ahmed Al-Hanfoosh began his coaching career with Al Ettifaq's youth sides before being appointed Technical Director of the club's youth teams in 2023 and interim head coach of the senior side in 2024.

Al-Hanfoosh joined the Saudi Arabia national team setup in 2025 and led the U17 side to glory at the 2025 WAFF U-17 Championship. At the AFC U17 Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2026™, the 46-year-old guided the hosts to the Quarter-finals, sealing their place at the FIFA U-17 World Cup Qatar 2026 in the process.



# TAJIKISTAN

| | SQUAD | DATE OF BIRTH | Position |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | MUHAMMADRAHIM RAHMONOV | 03-01-2009 | Goalkeeper |
| 2 | YOQUBJON MURODOV | 09-12-2009 | Defender |
| 3 | MUHAMMADJON KAROMATULLOZODA | 05-07-2010 | Defender |
| 4 | SADRIDDIN SATTOROV | 15-06-2009 | Defender |
| 5 | MUSTAFO HASANBEKOV | 29-01-2009 | Defender |
| 6 | YOSIN YUSUPOV | 17-08-2011 | Midfielder |
| 7 | ASADBEK MAKHTUMOV | 30-01-2009 | Forward |
| 8 | MEHRUBON ODILZODA | 15-09-2009 | Midfielder |
| 9 | MIRAHMADOV MUHAMMADJON | 19-04-2009 | Midfielder |
| 10 | PARVIZ SANGINOV | 05-10-2009 | Forward |
| 11 | FURQON RAHIMZODA | 25-08-2009 | Defender |
| 12 | HIKMATULLO KABIROV | 03-07-2010 | Defender |
| 13 | ISLOMDZHON KHODZHIEV | 05-07-2009 | Defender |
| 14 | OLIMJON OLIMOV | 28-05-2010 | Midfielder |
| 15 | ANVARZOD MUNAVAR | 31-10-2010 | Defender |
| 16 | RAMAZON ABDULOZODA | 16-09-2010 | Goalkeeper |
| 17 | PARVIZ BOBONAZAROV | 04-01-2009 | Midfielder |
| 18 | BIKHISHTI RADZHABZOD | 08-08-2010 | Forward |
| 19 | SIYOVUSH NAZAROV | 13-04-2010 | Midfielder |
| 20 | AZIZJON SHODIEV | 25-07-2010 | Midfielder |
| 21 | ALIJON SHUHRATJONZODA | 21-04-2010 | Forward |
| 22 | ALIDODOV MAKTOUM | 09-01-2009 | Midfielder |
| 23 | ABUBAKR RAHMONQULOV | 05-09-2009 | Goalkeeper |

## KEY PLAYERS

| | |
|---|---|
| 9 | MIRAHMADOV MUHAMMADJON |
| 10 | PARVIZ SANGINOV |



## STYLE OF PLAY

High-energy, direct football built on transitions, duels, and attacking momentum.

## ATTACKING AND TRANSITION TO DEFEND

1-4-3-3 / 1-3-4-3

- Build up from GK
- Fullback no.4 into midfield: 1-3-4-3
- Accurate switch of play by nos 20 and 17 in midfield
- Immediate pressure after ball loss

## DEFENDING AND TRANSITION TO ATTACK

1-4-5-1 / 1-4-4-2

- Defending high in opponent's half
- Quick transition, long passes or dribbling, switch play
- Full backs support counterattack
- Quick moving forward after regaining the ball.

## COACH

DALER KAYOSOV (TJK)



Daler Kayosov spent several years contributing to the grassroots and youth football landscape in Tajikistan and served as assistant coach of the national U23 men's side in 2019.

The 51-year-old also served as assistant to the senior team for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and AFC Asian Cup 2023™ Preliminary Joint Qualification matches in 2019 and 2021, before joining the U16 coaching staff in 2024 and eventually taking charge of the U17s in January 2026.

At the AFC U17 Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2026™, Kayosov steered his side to the Knockout Stage after they finished second in Group A. Although the Central Asians secured qualification for the FIFA U-17 World Cup Qatar 2026, their continental campaign came to an end in the Quarter-finals following a 5-0 defeat to eventual champions Japan.



# UZBEKISTAN

| SQUAD | | DATE OF BIRTH | Position |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | OLIMJON SHAMURATOV | 11-03-2009 | Goalkeeper |
| 2 | ABDISOLIEV M. | 06-05-2009 | Defender |
| 3 | MUHAMMADAZIZ RUZIBOEV | 08-07-2009 | Defender |
| 4 | MUHAMMAD KHAKIMOV | 04-10-2009 | Defender |
| 5 | ELSEVARBEK OLIMOV | 03-02-2009 | Defender |
| 6 | MUKHAMMADJON MAMATOV | 20-07-2009 | Midfielder |
| 7 | AMIRKHON ERKINOV | 10-01-2009 | Midfielder |
| 8 | ISLOM RAVSHANOV | 14-04-2009 | Midfielder |
| 9 | ASILBEK ALIEV | 01-01-2009 | Forward |
| 10 | MIRKOMILBEK MURODOV | 18-09-2009 | Midfielder |
| 11 | SUKHROB SADIRDJANOV | 31-03-2009 | Midfielder |
| 12 | MEKHROJBEK SIROJIDDINOV | 28-03-2009 | Goalkeeper |
| 13 | MIRJAMOL ANVAROV | 12-06-2009 | Defender |
| 14 | MUHAMMADODILKHON ORIFKHONOV | 12-06-2009 | Midfielder |
| 15 | NURMUHAMMAD UKTAMOV | 23-06-2009 | Midfielder |
| 16 | ADIS ABDUNABIEV | 10-12-2009 | Defender |
| 17 | JAKHONGIRMIRZO UKTAMBOEV | 10-07-2009 | Defender |
| 18 | FARRUKH KHAYITMURODOV | 13-01-2009 | Midfielder |
| 19 | AKHRORBEK RAVSHANBEKOV | 23-05-2009 | Midfielder |
| 20 | LAZIZ ABDURAIMOV | 26-10-2009 | Forward |
| 21 | ABDULBORIY ZOIDJONOV | 23-11-2009 | Goalkeeper |
| 22 | ABUBAKIR RAKHIMOV | 04-05-2009 | Midfielder |
| 23 | RUSTAM ALIEV | 30-05-2009 | Forward |

## KEY PLAYERS

| | |
|---|---|
| 19 | AKHRORBEK RAVSHANBEKOV |
| 7 | AMIRKHON ERKINOV |
| 11 | SUKHROB SADIRJONOV |
| 4 | MUHAMMAD KHAKIMOV |



## STYLE OF PLAY

Front foot attacking football built on technical midfield control and quick attacking combinations

## ATTACKING AND TRANSITION TO DEFEND

1-4-3-3

- Assured build up from the back through midfield
- Attacking fullbacks
- Rotating midfielders to get on the ball.
- Wing play, good crosses/ central attacks
- Low tempo in own half, acceleration in the final third
- When losing the ball immediate organized pressure to re-gain possession

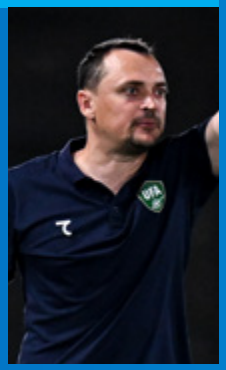
## DEFENDING AND TRANSITION TO ATTACK

1-4-5-1

- Compact and pressurizing the ball, at times high pressure on build up opponent
- Very quick forward movement after winning the ball.

## COACH

SERGEY CHIGODAEV (UZB)



A dedicated student of sports science and tactical development, Sergey Chigodaev built his reputation entirely within Uzbekistan's youth coaching system, spending several years developing local talent, including a stint as assistant coach of domestic side FC Olympic before taking the same role with the U23 national side from late 2021 to mid-2024.

Appointed head coach of the U17s in 2026, the 38-year-old masterminded an unforgettable continental campaign as he guided the young White Wolves to the Semi-finals of the AFC U17 Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2026™, where they were agonisingly denied a place in the Final after a dramatic 3-2 penalty shootout defeat to Japan.



# VIETNAM

| | SQUAD | DATE OF BIRTH | Position |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | CHU BA HUAN | 26-01-2009 | Goalkeeper |
| 2 | PHAM MINH CUONG | 21-09-2009 | Defender |
| 3 | NGUYEN MANH CUONG | 25-02-2009 | Defender |
| 4 | NGUYEN HUYNH DANG KHOA | 18-02-2009 | Defender |
| 5 | TRAN HOANG VIET | 22-02-2009 | Defender |
| 6 | DAO QUY VUONG | 10-09-2009 | Midfielder |
| 7 | NGUYEN HIEP DAI VIET NAM | 17-03-2009 | Midfielder |
| 8 | NGUYEN MINH THUY | 12-02-2009 | Midfielder |
| 9 | LE TRONG DAI NHAN | 08-10-2009 | Forward |
| 10 | CHU NGOC NGUYEN LUC | 28-07-2009 | Midfielder |
| 11 | NGUYEN VAN DUONG | 06-10-2009 | Forward |
| 12 | NGUYEN TUAN VU | 17-04-2009 | Goalkeeper |
| 13 | NGUYEN NGOC ANH HAO | 27-11-2009 | Defender |
| 14 | QUAN THANH CONG | 16-06-2009 | Defender |
| 15 | NGUYEN KHAC MINH DUC | 10-07-2009 | Defender |
| 16 | TRAN NGOC SON | 02-01-2009 | Forward |
| 17 | TRUONG NGUYEN DUY KHANG | 30-03-2009 | Midfielder |
| 18 | TRIEU DINH VY | 10-11-2009 | Midfielder |
| 19 | TRAN MANH QUAN | 26-06-2010 | Forward |
| 20 | LE SY BACH | 04-01-2009 | Forward |
| 21 | TRAN TRI DUNG | 24-03-2009 | Forward |
| 22 | DAU QUANG HUNG | 28-06-2009 | Forward |
| 23 | LY XUAN HOA | 21-07-2009 | Goalkeeper |

## KEY PLAYERS

| | |
|---|---|
| 3 | N. MANH CUONG |
| 10 | C. N. NGUYEN LUC |



## STYLE OF PLAY

Compact, technically tidy, transition-focused football with strong collective organization

## ATTACKING AND TRANSITION TO DEFEND

1-4-3-3/1-4-1-4-1

- Building up from GK + defenders into midfield
- Combination play, short combinations in/around the box
- Wing play, good crosses
- Quick retreat in own half applying pressure at the same time after losing the ball

## DEFENDING AND TRANSITION TO ATTACK

1-4-5-1

- High pressure on build up opposite team
- Organized aggressive defending
- Very quick forward movement after winning the ball
- Good counter attacks

## COACH

CRISTIANO ROLAND (BRA)



Cristiano Roland moved into coaching after a playing career spanning two decades as a defender across Europe, South America and Asia, representing clubs such as Benfica, Vasco da Gama and Hanoi FC.

Having spent the latter half of his playing career in Vietnam, Roland transitioned into coaching with Becamex Binh Duong and was appointed head coach of the Vietnam U17 national team in 2024. During the 49-year-old's tenure, the Southeast Asians enjoyed a successful AFC U17 Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2026™ qualifying campaign before going on to reach the Quarter-finals of the Finals, thereby booking a place at the FIFA U-17 World Cup for the first time in history.






# RESULTS

# RESULTS RESULTS RESULTS RESULTS RESULTS

## GROUP A

| Group A | P | W | D | L | F | A | GD | PTS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SAUDI ARABIA | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 11 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| TAJIKISTAN | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 8 | 5 | 3 | 7 |
| THAILAND | 3 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 6 | -4 | 1 |
| MYANMAR | 3 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 7 | -5 | 1 |

| No. | Date | Time | Team A | Score | Team B |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 05 May,26 | 20:00 | SAUDI ARABIA | 4-0 (2-0) | MYANMAR |
| 4 | 05 May,26 | 20:30 | TAJIKISTAN | 2-0 (1-0) | THAILAND |
| 10 | 09 May,26 | 20:00 | THAILAND | 0-2 (0-1) | SAUDI ARABIA |
| 11 | 09 May,26 | 20:30 | MYANMAR | 0-1 (0-1) | TAJIKISTAN |
| 17 | 12 May,26 | 20:00 | SAUDI ARABIA | 5-5 (4-2) | TAJIKISTAN |
| 18 | 12 May,26 | 20:00 | THAILAND | 2-2 (1-2) | MYANMAR |

## GROUP B

| Group B | P | W | D | L | F | A | GD | PTS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| JAPAN | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 3 | 5 | 9 |
| CHINA PR * | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| QATAR * | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 5 | -2 | 3 |
| INDONESIA * | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 5 | -3 | 3 |

| No. | Date | Time | Team A | Score | Team B |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | 05 May,26 | 19:00 | JAPAN | 3-1 (0-1) | QATAR |
| 3 | 05 May,26 | 19:30 | INDONESIA | 1-0 (0-0) | CHINA PR |
| 8 | 09 May,26 | 19:00 | CHINA PR | 1-2 (0-1) | JAPAN |
| 9 | 09 May,26 | 19:30 | QATAR | 2-0 (0-0) | INDONESIA |
| 15 | 12 May,26 | 19:00 | JAPAN | 3-1 (1-0) | INDONESIA |
| 16 | 12 May,26 | 19:00 | CHINA PR | 2-0 (1-0) | QATAR |

*Final standings based on goal difference among teams tied on points.

## GROUP C

| Group C | P | W | D | L | F | A | GD | PTS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| VIETNAM | 3 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 6 | -1 | 6 |
| KOREA REPUBLIC | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| YEMEN | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 4 |
| UNITED ARAB EMIRATES | 3 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 7 | -2 | 1 |

| No. | Date | Time | Team A | Score | Team B |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | 06 May,26 | 20:00:00 | YEMEN | 0-1 (0-0) | VIETNAM |
| 7 | 06 May,26 | 20:30:00 | KOREA REPUBLIC | 1-1 (0-1) | UNITED ARAB EMIRATES |
| 12 | 10 May,26 | 19:00:00 | VIETNAM | 1-4 (1-0) | KOREA REPUBLIC |
| 13 | 10 May,26 | 19:30:00 | UNITED ARAB EMIRATES | 2-3 (1-0) | YEMEN |
| 20 | 13 May,26 | 20:00:00 | KOREA REPUBLIC | 0-0 (0-0) | YEMEN |
| 21 | 13 May,26 | 20:00:00 | VIETNAM | 3-2 (1-1) | UNITED ARAB EMIRATES |

## GROUP D

| Group D | P | W | D | L | F | A | GD | PTS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UZBEKISTAN | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 5 | 6 |
| AUSTRALIA | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| INDIA | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 7 | -7 | 0 |

| No. | Date | Time | Team A | Score | Team B |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | 06 May,26 | 19:00:00 | AUSTRALIA | 4-0 (2-0) | INDIA |
| 14 | 10 May,26 | 20:00:00 | INDIA | 0-3 (0-1) | UZBEKISTAN |
| 19 | 13 May,26 | 19:00:00 | UZBEKISTAN | 2-0 (2-0) | AUSTRALIA |

# RESULTS RESULTS RESULTS RESULTS RESULTS

## QUARTER-FINALS

| No. | Date | Time | Team A | Score | Team B |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 22 | 15 May,26 | 19:00:00 | JAPAN | 5-0 (1-0) | TAJIKISTAN |
| 23 | 15 May,26 | 20:00:00 | SAUDI ARABIA | 1-3 (1-1) | CHINA PR |
| 24 | 16 May,26 | 19:00:00 | UZBEKISTAN | 2-2 (2-1)<br>5-3 PSO | KOREA REPUBLIC |
| 25 | 16 May,26 | 20:00:00 | VIETNAM | 0-3 (0-1) | AUSTRALIA |

## SEMI-FINALS

| No. | Date | Time | Team A | Score | Team B |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 26 | 19 May,26 | 18:00:00 | JAPAN | 1-1 (0-1)<br>3-2 PSO | UZBEKISTAN |
| 27 | 19 May,26 | 21:30:00 | CHINA PR | 2-0 (0-0) | AUSTRALIA |

## FINAL

| No. | Date | Time | Team A | Score | Team B |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 28 | 22 May,26 | 20:00:00 | CHINA PR | 2-3 (0-3) | JAPAN |








# REFEREEING

# 1. SUMMARY

A delegation of 38 match officials from 14 Member Associations — including 12 Referees, 16 Assistant Referees, one Standby Referee and two Standby Assistant Referees — officiated the AFC U17 Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2026™. As part of the new developmental cooperation between the AFC and UEFA, the delegation included one Referee and one Assistant Referee from UEFA. The group also notably featured one Woman referee and one Woman Assistant Referee, reflecting the AFC's commitment to continue to develop Woman Match Officials on the Continent. Additionally, five Referee Assessors and two Fitness Instructors ensured performance and physical standards were upheld throughout the tournament.

## 1.1 AFC MATCH OFFICIALS

| Referees | MA |
|---|---|
| Adam Peter Kersey | AUS |
| Lothar D'Hondt | BEL |
| Du Jianxin | CHN |
| Harish Kundu | IND |
| Ms. Veronika Bernatskaia | KGZ |
| Abdullah Dhafer A Alshehri | KSA |
| Saud M M T A Alsamhan | KUW |
| Yahya Ahmed Ibrahim Al Balushi | OMA |
| Leow Hong Wei, Clarence | SGP |
| Wiwat Jumpaoon | THA |
| Sultan Mohamed Saleh Yousif Alhammadi | UAE |
| Akobirkhuja Shukurullaev | UZB |

| Assistant Referees | MA |
|---|---|
| Bradley John Wright | AUS |
| Owen Goldrick | AUS |
| Romain Devillers | BEL |
| Tang Chao | CHN |
| Arun Sasidharan Pillai | IND |
| Ms. Ramina Tsoi | KGZ |
| Omar Ali A Aljamal | KSA |
| Saad Saud S Alsubaie | KSA |
| Talal A GH O B Alshammari | KUW |
| Hamood Said Hamed Hmed Al Shuaibi | OMA |
| Mohammed Said Salim Juma Al Ghazali | OMA |
| Andy Tan Mint Land | SGP |
| Pattarapong Kijsathit | THA |
| Ali Rashid Mohamed Aljorn Alnuaimi | UAE |
| Islom Azimov | UZB |
| Alisher Usmanov | UZB |
| **Standby Referees** | **MA** |
| Wong Wai Lun | HKG |
| **Standby Assistant Referees** | **MA** |
| Sukh-Erdene Ganbold | MNG |
| Liyanagunawardhana Dhanushka Sampath | SRI |
| **Technical Instructors / Assessors** | **MA** |
| Jim Ouliaris | AUS |
| Hakan Anaz | AUS |
| Raymond John Henry Olivier | ENG |
| Sukhbir Singh | SGP |
| Valentin Kovalenko | UZB |
| **Fitness Instructors** | **MA** |
| Ganesan S/O Maniam | SGP |
| Banjar Mohammed B J Al-Dosari | QAT |

## 1.2 SUPPORT TEAM

**Referees' Liaison Officers (RLOs):** A team of RLOs supported the coordination of all logistics related to refereeing activities. They played a crucial role in facilitating communication with the hosts, ensuring smooth operations and addressing any logistical issues that arose during the event.

**Players' Team:** A dedicated local team comprising 28 players and two coaches took part in the referees' practical training sessions to simulate different incidents that could arise during a match.

**Physiotherapist/Masseurs:** One physiotherapist and three masseurs were readily available to assist match officials with recovery and injury prevention. Their presence ensured that officials received proper care to maintain their peak physical condition throughout the competition.

**Medical Team:** A dedicated Medical Doctor was stationed at the official AFC HQ throughout the tournament, providing medical assistance when needed. For daily field operations, an ambulance and a team of paramedics were positioned at the training venue to provide immediate emergency response and first aid.

## 2. PREPARATORY COURSE

From May 2 to 4, match officials engaged in a three-day preparatory course consisting of theoretical sessions, fitness checks and practical training sessions, which aimed to equip the match officials with the technical and physical readiness required for the competition.

### 2.1 FITNESS CHECK

All match officials were declared physically qualified to cope with the match demands upon the successful completion of the following fitness checks:

- Referees Yo-Yo Intermittent Test (target: 18.8)
- ARIET - Assistant Referee Intermittent Endurance Test (target: 15.5.4)

### 2.2 PRACTICAL SESSIONS

With the support of two local teams and coaches, match officials engaged in a comprehensive practical training programme to simulate match incidents under the guidance of the Referee Instructors. Concurrently, physical conditioning and match preparations were conducted by the Fitness Instructors to ensure the match officials were prepared to officiate upcoming matches.

### 2.3 THEORETICAL SESSIONS

The theoretical sessions were designed to further enhance the technical knowledge of the match officials and optimise the level of consistency in their application of the Laws of the Game. Numerous match incident videos were reviewed and discussed to facilitate the match officials' participation, analysis and consensus.

At the conclusion of the course, match officials received important feedback and information regarding both fitness and technical aspects to enhance their match preparations.

Technical Topics:

- Game Management
- Handball
- Offside
- Positioning and Reading of the Game
- Tactical Fouls
- Penalty Area Incidents
- Challenges

Fitness Topics:

- Weight Control
- Fitness Check
- Recovery Exercises

### 2.4 PREPARATION IN NON-REFEREEING TECHNICAL TOPICS

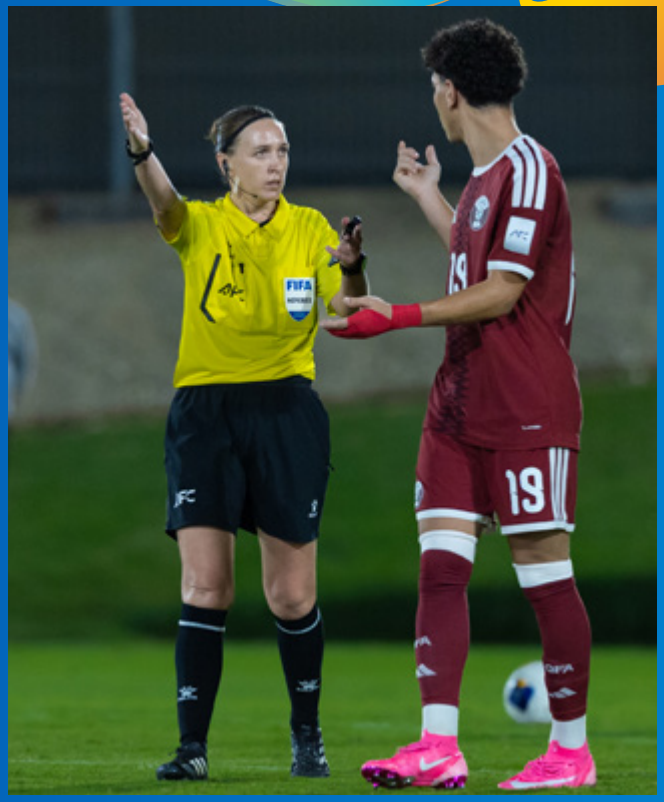
In preparation for the tournament, different functional units' topics were covered to provide referees with the ultimate tools and guidance prior to the start of the tournament. These sessions aimed to enhance referees' awareness of the crucial roles and discipline required both on and off the pitch during the competition.

**Competition Overview:**

- Encompassing rules, regulations, and procedures governing the competition from start to finish
- Included competition format, scheduling, venues, match operations, and incident management

**Sports Integrity:**

- Disciplinary procedures and Prevention of Match-fixing



## 3. DURING COMPETITION

### 3.1 PRACTICAL SESSIONS

Match officials followed a structured physical program built around match schedules, with physical conditioning tapering in the days before each game to ensure peak readiness, while ongoing strength and core work guarded against fatigue injuries across a dense fixture calendar. Post-match, all officials completed a mandatory recovery protocol combining active gymnasium work, massage, hydrotherapy, and ice baths to accelerate both physical repair and reduce mental fatigue.

### 3.2 MATCH ASSESSMENT

Match officiating performances were evaluated via a dual-assessment system, leveraging a Remote Referee Assessor who analysed live video footage from HQ to compile detailed incident reports, alongside an On-Site Referee Assessor who monitored capabilities directly at the venue to provide immediate, first-hand feedback.

### 3.3 MATCH DEBRIEFING SESSIONS

Match debriefings served as an essential learning tool for appointed officials, utilising the analysis of significant incidents from prior matches to prepare them for upcoming assignments. By reviewing specific plays and offering guidance on officiating standards, instructors highlighted key areas for growth and delivered actionable advice to guarantee consistency and uniformity in both foul recognition and the interpretation of the Laws of the Game.



### 3.4 Match Preparation Sessions

Mr. Wim Koevermans, AFC Deputy Technical Director, presented insights related to team tactics, individual players' styles and behaviors, which proved to be beneficial for the match officials' preparation and understanding of football dynamics and trends. Overall, this allowed match officials to gain deeper insights into teams and improve game management and officiating standards



## 4. TECHNICAL SUMMARY

### 4.1 GENERAL PERFORMANCE

The referee assessors and instructors team, through their match reports and close monitoring, rated the overall match officials' performance positively. The daily training, match debriefings and other activities and resources organised to raise the refereeing standards contributed significantly to decision-making as the tournament progressed.



### 4.2 GENERAL MANAGEMENT

The following disciplinary data was recorded across all matches at the AFC U17 Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2026™:

| Metric | Total | Match Average |
|---|---|---|
| Total Disciplinary Sanctions | 85 | - |
| Cautions (Yellow Cards) | 83 | 2.96 |
| Direct Red Cards | 2 | 0.07 |

The disciplinary statistics reflect well-managed officiating with effective intervention to maintain player safety and game control.




# EXTRA TIME

## SQUAD INFO

| Team | Average Starting Age (Y, D) | Total Starting XI Changes | Total Players Used | Total Goal Scorers(excl OGs) | Total Games |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Japan U17 | 16y 328d | 36 | 21 | 9 | 6 |
| Qatar U17 | 16y 271d | 4 | 20 | 2 | 3 |
| China PR U17 | 17y 17d | 6 | 21 | 6 | 6 |
| Indonesia U17 | 16y 295d | 7 | 21 | 2 | 3 |
| Saudi Arabia U17 | 16y 300d | 15 | 23 | 9 | 4 |
| Myanmar U17 | 16y 292d | 5 | 19 | 1 | 3 |
| Tajikistan U17 | 16y 149d | 9 | 20 | 4 | 4 |
| Thailand U17 | 16y 325d | 8 | 21 | 2 | 3 |
| Australia U17 | 17y 5d | 11 | 21 | 7 | 4 |
| India U17 | 16y 164d | 2 | 18 | 0 | 2 |
| Yemen U17 | 16y 31d | 2 | 19 | 3 | 3 |
| Vietnam U17 | 16y 336d | 0 | 18 | 5 | 4 |
| United Arab Emirates U17 | 16y 322d | 2 | 18 | 5 | 3 |
| Korea Republic U17 | 16y 356d | 12 | 19 | 5 | 4 |
| Uzbekistan U17 | 16y 333d | 4 | 22 | 4 | 4 |

## SHOOTING ACCURACY (ON TARGET)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | UAE | 59.1% (11) |
| 2 | KSA | 57.4% (27) |
| 3 | MYA | 53.8% (7) |
| 4 | VIE | 53.3% (16) |
| 5 | CHN | 51.9% (28) |

## DEFENDING - SHOTS FACED (ON TARGET)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | YEM | 26 (10) |
| 2 | UZB | 31 (10) |
| 3 | KOR | 31 (12) |
| 4 | JPN | 32 (12) |
| 5 | THA | 40 (16) |

## TOP GOAL SCORERS

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Maki Kitahara | (JPN) | 6 |
| 2 | Akhrorbek Ravshanbeko | (UZB) | 4 |
| 3 | Zhao Songyuan | (CHN) | 3 |
| 4 | Kakeru Saito | (JPN) | 3 |

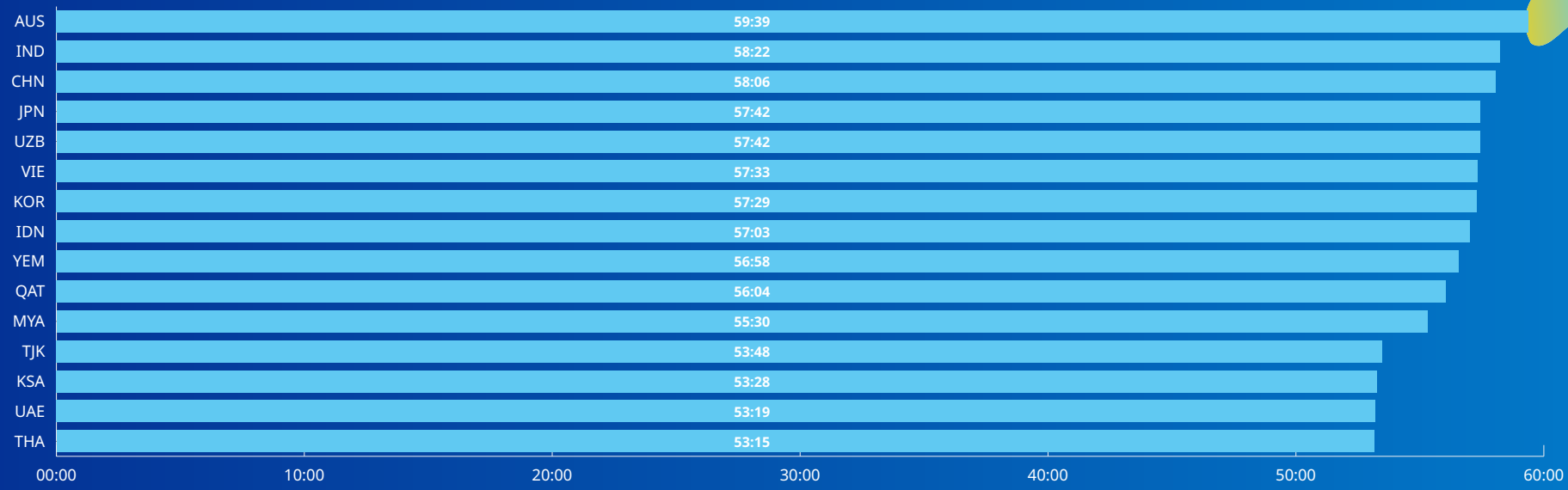
## TOP 5 ASSISTS AND CHANCES CREATED

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Rekuto Shiraogawa | (JPN) | 5 (10) |
| 2 | Wan Xiang | (CHN) | 3 (23) |
| 3 | Takeshi Wada | (JPN) | 3 (11) |
| 4 | Hussain Yousuf Ali | (UAE) | 3 (5) |
| 4 | Sora Iwatsuchi | (JPN) | 2 (11) |

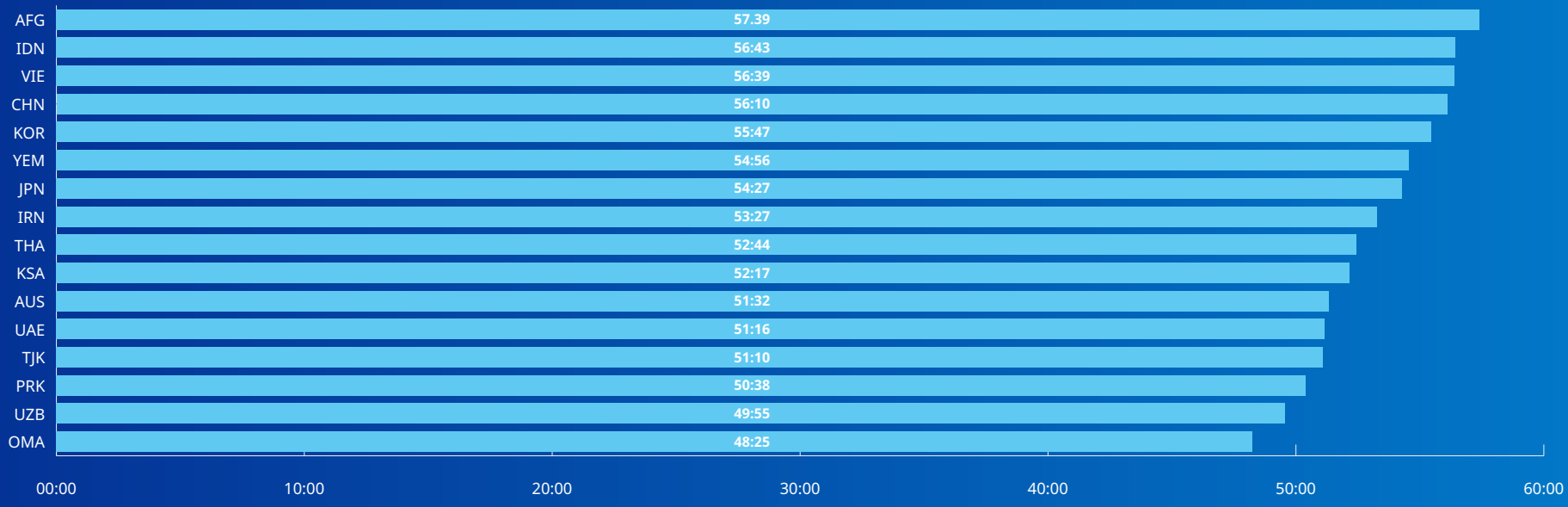


# EXTRA TIME EXTRA TIME EXTRA TIME

## AVERAGE ACTUAL PLAYING TIME 2026




## AVERAGE ACTUAL PLAYING TIME 2025



# EXTRA TIME EXTRA TIME EXTRA TIME




## WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED

**203 MILLION**
IMPRESSIONS

**45 MILLION**
VIDEO VIEWS

**2.7 MILLION**
ENGAGEMENTS

**493**
TOTAL POSTS

## THE-AFC.COM

**950,895**
USERS

**2,301,747**
PAGE VIEWS




# AFC COMMITTEES

# AFC COMMITTEES AFC COMMITTEES

## AFC COMPETITIONS COMMITTEE

| NAME | POSITION | MEMBER ASSOCIATION |
|---|---|---|
| DR. TRAN QUOC TUAN | CHAIRPERSON | VFF |
| MR. DASTANBEK KONOKBAEV | DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON | KFU |
| MR. GARY MORETTI | Member | Football Australia |
| MR. KAZI MD. SALAHUDDIN | Member | BFF |
| MR. YANG XU | Member | CFA |
| MR. IWAN BOEDIANTO | Member | PSSI |
| MR. TSUNEYASU MIYAMOTO | Member | JFA |
| MR. CHUN HANJIN | Member | KFA |
| MR. OSAMA HUSAIN SULTAN | Member | KFA |
| MR. SEMAAN DOUAIHY | Member | LFA |
| DATUK WIRA MOHD YUSOFF BIN MAHADI | Member | FAM |
| MR. TUN TUN AUNG | Member | MFF |
| DR. AHMED KHELLIL ABBASSI | Member | QFA |
| MR. NAEIM ALBAKR | Member | SAFF |
| MR. DAVLATMAND ISLOMOV | Member | TFF |
| MR. PAIRIT TANPAIREE | Member | FA Thailand |
| MR. MOHAMMED ABDULLA HAZZAM ALDHAHERI | Member | UAE FA |

## AFC TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

| NAME | POSITION | MEMBER ASSOCIATION |
|---|---|---|
| MR. KOHZO TASHIMA | CHAIRPERSON | JFA |
| MR. ADNAN DARJAL MOTAR | DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON | IFA |
| MR. MOHAMMAD YOSUF KARGAR | Member | AFF |
| MS. HEATHER GARRIOCK | Member | Football Australia |
| MR. CHENG XU | Member | CFA |
| DR. SEYED MIRSHAD MAJEDI | Member | FFIRI |
| DR. LEE YOUNG SOO | Member | KFA |
| MR. FAHAD ABDULLA AL ZARRAA | Member | QFA |
| MR. MOHAMMED AMEEN HAIDAR | Member | SAFF |
| MR. MUHANNAD ALFAKEER | Member | SFA |
| MR. BAKHTIYOR DADAMATOV | Member | UFA |

## AFC REFEREES COMMITTEE

| NAME | POSITION | MEMBER ASSOCIATION |
|---|---|---|
| MR. HANY TALEB B S AL-RAEESI | CHAIRPERSON | QFA |
| MR. RAVSHAN IRMATOV | DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON | UFA |
| MR. CUI ENLEI | Member | CFA |
| MR. KENJI OGIYA | Member | JFA |
| MR. MUN JIN HEE | Member | KFA |
| MR. NURDIN BUKUEV | Member | KFU |
| MS. WIDIYA HABIBAH SHAMSURI | Member | FAM |
| MR. ALI ALTRAIFI | Member | SAFF |
| MR. SALEM ALI ALSHAMSI | Member | UAE FA |



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



## AFC U17 ASIAN CUP SAUDI ARABIA 2026

**EDITORIAL GROUP**
Andy Roxburgh
Graham Turner
Isaac Christian

**TECHNICAL OBSERVER TEAM**

| | |
|---|---|
| Wim Koevermans | (AFC) |
| Nihad KH S Souqar | (Jordan) |
| Toshev Usmon | (Uzbekistan) |
| Mohammed Eid Aldushashi | (Saudi Arabia) |

**PRODUCTION TEAM**

| | |
|---|---|
| Jose Marcelino Carpio | |
| Masahiro Sugiyama | |
| Khalid Idris | |
| Jae Lee | (Refereeing) |

**PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEOGRAPHY**

| | |
|---|---|
| SJ Sai | |
| Adrian Chan | |
| Jeremy Chor | (Video Analyst) |

**DESIGN**
Faridah Zetty

## OFFICIAL GLOBAL PARTNERS




## OFFICIAL GLOBAL SUPPORTERS




BACK TO THE TOP

AFC U17 ASIAN CUP AFC U17 ASIAN CUP AFC U17 ASIAN CUP AFC U17 ASIAN CUP