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AFC
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LEAGUE

MESSAGE FROM THE **AFC PRESIDENT**

Dear friends,

It gives me great pleasure to present the first-ever technical report of the groundbreaking AFC Women's Champions League™ 2024/25, which by all accounts marked the beginning of a new dawn for women's football in Asia.

Our heartfelt congratulations must go to Wuhan Jiangda Women's FC on their historic triumph, and with both the senior women's Continental club and national team crowns in the hands of China PR, credit must go to the Chinese Football Association (CFA) for their pioneering efforts in advancing the women's game.

Likewise, our praise also goes to Melbourne City FC for their exceptional teamwork and resilience throughout the competition, as well as Football Australia for fostering a thriving environment and a clear pathway for the growth of women's football in the country.

The consistently high standards that were observed in the maiden season of the AFC Women's Champions League™ reinforced the importance of staying informed on the emerging trends in the sport, and I am certain you will find that the AFC's Technical Observers Team has done an excellent job of capturing these essential technical aspects, which will form the basis for us to further

enhance future editions of Asia's premier women's club competition.

We extend our sincere gratitude to them for their thorough analysis, and I am confident that this latest addition to the Confederation's extensive library of technical publications will serve as a valuable resource and point of reference for tacticians throughout the Continent, particularly as the AFC looks forward to a new chapter for women's football.

As with all new competitions, the inaugural AFC Women's Champions League™ 2024/25 has been a fantastic platform for new talent to emerge and this report also highlights the standout players who have the potential to transform into global icons of the sport in the coming years.

Above all, their success underscores the AFC's Vision and Mission of providing top-level competitions for our players and teams to shine on the Continental stage, and it is our ambition to establish a robust women's club landscape that will build an enduring legacy and inspire the next generation of women footballers.

Furthermore, this report provides an overview of the AFC's match officials, who performed commendably, and most notably,

the impact of the competition in expanding the opportunities for women referees to continue their trailblazing path must also be recognised.

I must also thank all the centralised host Member Associations across the Preliminary and Group Stages, and the CFA for their unwavering support in organising both the group phase and decisive ties in Wuhan.

Of course, we must not forget all our valued stakeholders, our sponsors and commercial partners, the media, our passionate fans, and the volunteers who have contributed to this landmark celebration of women's football.

As I conclude, I would also like to convey my sincere appreciation to the AFC Women's Football, Technical, and Referees Committees, whose tireless dedication and wise leadership give us great optimism for creating an even brighter and better future for the women's game in the years to come.

I hope you find this Technical Report both informative and insightful.



Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa
AFC President

AFC WOMEN'S CHAMPIONS LEAGUE™ 2024/25

The inaugural edition of the AFC Women's Champions League™ represented an opportunity for the majority of participants – players and coaches – to measure themselves for the first time against opponents on the international stage. The competition graphically mapped the strata within women's club football in the AFC territories and served as a benchmarking event in terms of clarifying the technical, tactical and physical requisites for competing at the elite level.

The competition kicked off in August 2024 with 13 clubs taking part in a Preliminary Stage based on mini-tournaments at single venues. The four group winners completed the line-up for a Group Stage where 12 contestants were divided into three groups of four and played three games in seven days in October at centralised venues in Ho Chi Minh City

(Vietnam), Pathum Thani (Thailand) and Wuhan (China PR). The top two in each group and the two best third-placed teams progressed to the Quarter-Finals – the only non-centralised round of the competition, where the three group winners and the best runner-up were granted home advantage in the games played in March 2025. Six of the top eight clubs were based in the East sector of the AFC, with Abu Dhabi Country Club (United Arab Emirates) and Bam Khatoon (Islamic Republic of Iran) representing the West.

The climax to the inaugural season was a Finals event staged in Wuhan in May and involving teams from Australia, China PR, Vietnam and Korea Republic – a fact which illustrated predominance by the East in club football. The first title-holder, Wuhan Jiangda, therefore played five of their six fixtures on home territory, winning two of them. As it

happened, the winners of both the men's and women's AFC Champions League™ played the Final on home territory. Runners-up Melbourne City were undefeated during the competition, as were Urawa Red Diamonds of Japan who were eliminated without conceding a goal. Both were beaten by the eventual champions in penalty shootouts, in the Final and Quarter-Final respectively.

This review is based on the 25 matches played during the Group and Knockout Stages, allied with the impressions of the AFC's Technical Observer Team at the final tournament captained by AFC Head of Women's Football, Bai Lili, accompanied by Rae Dower (Australia) and Chan Yuen Ting (Hong Kong, China), the first female coach to lead a men's professional team to a league title.





COMPETITION OVERVIEW

COMPETITION OVERVIEW

Wuhan Jiangda Women's FC won the inaugural AFC Women's Champions League™ 2024/25 after defeating Melbourne City FC of Australia on penalties in the Final, with the victory also sealing the China PR club's place in the FIFA Women's Champions Cup 2026.

The tournament kicked off with the centralised Preliminary Stage, which was held between August 25 to 31, 2024. The teams were divided into four groups with only the top side from each advancing to the Group Stage, joining eight teams that had already sealed automatic qualification.

The centralised Group Stage – which had three groups – was played from October 3 to 12, 2024, with the top



two sides from each group and the two best third-placed teams advancing to the Quarter-finals.

The Knockout Stage draw was conducted at the AFC House in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on January 8, 2025, with the Quarter-finals played in a single-leg format. The Semi-finals and Final were contested in the centralised venue of Wuhan from May 21 to 24, with all ties as single-leg affairs.



PRELIMINARY STAGE

Contested under a centralised format, Abu Dhabi Country Club of the United Arab Emirates topped Group A with a perfect nine points after wins over Young Elephants FC of Laos (2-1), Myanmar's Myawady WFC (1-0) and Al Nassr Club of Saudi Arabia (1-0).

India's Odisha FC were the Group B winners after defeating Lion City Sailors FC of Singapore (4-1) and Jordan's Etihad Club (2-1).

Malaysia's Sabah FC emerged the Group C winners after a goalless draw with Armed Police Force FC of Nepal and a 2-1 victory over PFC Nasaf Qarshi of Uzbekistan.

Bam Khatoon FC of the Islamic Republic of Iran were the standout team in Group D, defeating Bhutan's Royal Thimphu College FC 2-1 and Hong Kong, China's Kitchee SC 2-0.



GROUP STAGE

The three group winners and runners-up, along with the two best third-placed teams, advanced to the Quarter-finals.

Group A saw Korea Republic's Hyundai Steel Red Angels Women's FC finishing on seven points with Abu Dhabi Country Club of UAE also advancing as the runners-up with five points.

China PR's Wuhan Jiangda Women's FC also went through as one of the two best third-placed sides.

Australia's Melbourne City FC were peerless in Group B with three wins and were joined in the Quarter-finals by Islamic Republic of Iran's Bam Khatoon FC, who finished with four points.

Japan's Urawa Red Diamonds Ladies finished top of Group C with a perfect record of three wins, with Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh City Women's FC joining them in the next stage as the runners-up.

Chinese Taipei's Taichung Blue Whale Women's Football Team also booked a spot in the Quarter-finals, advancing as one of the two best third-placed teams.

QUARTER-FINALS

HYUNDAI STEEL RED ANGELS WOMEN'S FC (KOR) 1-0
BAM KHATOON FC (IRN)

Kim Myeong-jin came off the bench to secure Hyundai Steel Red Angels Women's FC a 1-0 win over Bam Khatoon FC in their Quarter-final contest.

Korea Republic's Red Angels tested Bam Khatoon as early as the third minute with Kim So-eun seeing her volleyed attempt saved by goalkeeper Raha Yazdani, who later comfortably gathered Ko Yoo-jin's header from inside the box.

IR Iran's Bam Khatoon gradually got into their stride and almost stunned the Red Angels in the eighth minute after Negin Zandi collected Mona Hamoudi's pass before rattling the left post with her long-range effort.

Bam Khatoon threatened again five minutes later with Melika Motevalli angling her header off a set-piece, which forced Red Angels goalkeeper Kim Min-jung into making a finger-tip save.

The Iranians were let off in the 23rd minute after Kim So-eun surged down the right before sending a delightful cross for Yuka Toriumi, whose goal was disallowed for a handball.

Red Angels went on the offensive in the second half but were left frustrated by Bam Khatoon's resolute defending with captain Jang Chang seeing her left-footed shot from just inside the box cleared off the line by Sarshin Kamangar.

However, Bam Khatoon's resistance was finally broken in the 81st minute after a lapse in concentration allowed Haruhi Suzuki to send a deft lob to substitute Kim, who controlled the ball with her chest before slotting home the winner past Yazdani.



QUARTER-FINALS QUARTER-FINALS

MELBOURNE CITY FC (AUS) 3-0 TAICHUNG BLUE WHALE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL TEAM (TPE)

Melbourne City FC cruised to a 3-0 win over Chinese Taipei's Taichung Blue Whale Women's Football Team in their Quarter-final.

The victory set up a Semi-final showdown with Hyundai Steel Red Angels Women's FC of Korea Republic.

Melbourne City got off to a bright start when Alexia Apostolakis's fourth-minute corner took a bounce across the face of goal, with Mariana Speckmaier steering Taylor Otto's flick at the near post into the back of the net.

The Australian side continued to dominate possession against a defensive Taichung Blue Whale and came close to scoring again at the half-hour mark, with Holly McNamara forcing a brilliant save from goalkeeper Tsai Ming-Jung.

Taichung Blue Whale had their first look on goal in the 39th minute with Maho Tanaka shooting from distance into the path of Melbourne City custodian Malena Garcia.

Melbourne City's high-pressing game led to their second goal in the 44th minute after Rhianna Pollicina played the ball deep for McNamara, whose low cross from the left flank was deflected into the back of the net by the unfortunate Li Pei-Jung.



Chasing a two-goal deficit, Taichung Blue Whale ventured forward in the second half, but their plan backfired when Tsai conceded a penalty in the 63rd minute after bringing down McNamara, who made no mistake from the spot.

Taichung Blue Whale conceded another penalty in the 78th minute after substitute Emilia Murray pounced on a poor back pass from Lin Yu-Syuan before being felled by Tsai. The Chinese Taipei custodian, however, went the right way to deny Leticia McKenna from the spot.

Tanaka came close to scoring for Taichung Blue Whale in the 82nd minute after the midfielder weaved into the box before striking a powerful shot, which was initially fumbled by Garcia, before the custodian recovered to gather the ball on the line as Melbourne saw out the remaining minutes comfortably.

QUARTER-FINALS QUARTER-FINALS

HO CHI MINH CITY WOMEN'S FC (VIE) 5-4 ABU DHABI COUNTRY CLUB (UAE)

An amazing comeback saw Ho Chi Minh City Women's FC defeat Abu Dhabi Country Club 5-4 in a thrilling Quarter-final.

Trailing 3-0 at the break and then 4-2, Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh City fought back to roar to victory.

Ho Chi Minh City had to withstand early pressure from Abu Dhabi with Rashida Ibrahim pulling her shot from above the six-yard-box just wide off the right post, and the home side's defence was breached shortly after.

The goal came after some brilliant work by Princella Adubea, who collected Ibrahim's pass before unleashing a piledriver from distance into the bottom left corner as Abu Dhabi got off to a dream start.

Abu Dhabi doubled their advantage in the 15th minute after Salha Al Zaabi's long-range effort struck the bar, with the rebound falling kindly for Toorfah Al Ghafri to slot the ball home from close range.

The Vietnamese side fell further behind in the second minute of added time at the end of the first half with Eugenia Tetteh nodding home Adubea's cross from the right.

A determined Ho Chi Minh City upped their tempo after the break and came close to reducing the deficit in the 60th minute when Aubrey Goodwill struck the bar from inside the box.

An injury to Al Ghafri then gave Ho Chi Minh City the edge in the 63rd minute with K' Thua scoring from close range off a poor clearance from Fatima Jassem.

The Vietnamese side scored their second goal four minutes later courtesy off Chuong Thi Kieu's glancing header, but Abu Dhabi came back fighting with Tetteh netting in the 74th after Naeema Ibrahim dispossessed Nguyen Thi Kim Yen before supplying a cross for the Ghanaian midfielder.

But Abu Dhabi's joy was cut short two minutes later when Tran Nguyen Bao Chau struck from long range to beat Jeane Bueno before Ngo Thi Hong Nhung drew Ho Chi Minh City level in the 83rd minute following her lob from just above the box.

A buoyant Ho Chi Minh City applied further pressure and forced Abu Dhabi into conceding an own goal in the 90th minute when Ghanima Al Zaabi inadvertently headed Ngo Thi Hong Nhung's cross into her own net to complete an amazing come-from-behind win.



QUARTER-FINALS QUARTER-FINALS

URAWA RED DIAMONDS LADIES (JPN) 0-0 WUHAN JIANGDA WOMEN'S FC (CHN) - AET, WUHAN JIANGDA WON 6-5 ON PENALTIES

Wuhan Jiangda Women's FC of China PR edged Urawa Red Diamonds Ladies of Japan 6-5 on penalties in their Quarter-final, with the match having ended 0-0 after 120 minutes.

Substitute goalkeeper Chen Chen was the star of the shootout, saving twice as Wuhan Jiangda booked a Semi-final meeting with Ho Chi Minh City Women's FC of Vietnam.

Urawa, who scored an impressive 21 goals and conceded none in the Group Stage, were let off the hook in the fifth minute after Wuhan's Song Fei sent a long ball for Tereza Engesha, who outmuscled her marker down the right flank before seeing her shot parried away by goalkeeper Sakiko Ikeda.

The Japanese side almost broke through five minutes later when Reina Nagashima floated a cross into the box for Mei Shimada, who failed to make contact, with the ball then taking a bounce before missing the right post by a whisker.

Urawa had a half chance in the 33rd minute but Wuhan kept cool with Wu Haiyan intercepting Yuzuho Shiokoshi's flick for Shimada, who later had her attempt from just inside the box saved by Ding Xuan.

Hana Takahashi and Shimada both saw their efforts from distance sail over the bar, while Ding pulled off a save to deny Miki Ito's attempt from point blank range as the tie remained goalless heading into the break.

Ding had to be on her toes two minutes after the restart when she foiled Yuzuho Shiokoshi from just above the box, while Akari Kurishima skied her attempt from inside the area following Shimada's layoff from a set-piece situation.



Urawa almost found a way through in the 76th minute but Ding was quick to cut out Ito's long pass to Takahashi as the match went into extra-time.

The Japanese side spurned clear-cut chances with substitute Satoko Fujisaki forcing Ding into a fingertip save in the first half of extra-time, before coming close again in the second period after seeing her curling effort sail over the bar.

Wuhan wasted an attempt in the closing stages of the second half with Deng Mengye failing to score from her own half into an unattended goal, while Takahashi blasted wide from close range as the match went to penalties.

Chen Chen, who replaced Ding just before the shootout, lived up to expectations to deny Ito and Yu Endo as Wuhan Jiangda continued their journey into the Semi-finals.



SEMI-FINALS

WUHAN JIANGDA WOMEN'S FC (CHN) 2-0 HO CHI MINH CITY WOMEN'S FC (VIE)

Wuhan Jiangda Women's FC marched into the Final after a commanding 2-0 win over Ho Chi Minh City Women's FC in their last-four tie.

The China PR side were dominant from start to finish against their Vietnamese opponents.

Ho Chi Minh City suffered an early setback when an injury forced Cu Thi Hyunh Nhu off after only 14 minutes, with Nguyen Thi Kim Yen coming on.

Wuhan Jiangda went close with Wang Shuang threatening with a powerful free-kick which was thwarted by an alert Quach Thu Em.

The persistent pressure paid off in the 34th minute when Tereza Engesha forced her way into the box. Her cutback was blocked but the rebound fell kindly for the impressive Wang Shuang, who directed her sublime curling effort into the top corner for the opener.

The hosts could have added to their advantage when Wang Shuang played Song Duan through but Quach was quick off her line to block the shot before Engesha dragged an effort wide.

Wuhan Jiangda maintained their dominance after the interval, needing only nine minutes to double their lead with Engesha teeing up Song Duan on the edge of the box for a spectacular finish that left Quach completely stranded.

The visitors had their first look at goal in the 56th minute when Huynh Nhu broke free on the right and produced a telling cross which found Hong Nhung, but the latter's header was easily gathered by Ding Xuan.

Late into the game, Huynh Nhu's cross took a wicked deflection off defender Ma Jun which forced Ding to readjust her position to make the save but that was all Ho Chi Minh City could muster as Wuhan Jiangda cruised into the Final.

HYUNDAI STEEL RED ANGELS WOMEN'S FC (KOR) 0-1 MELBOURNE CITY FC (AUS)

Shelby McMahon scored in the fourth minute of added time as Melbourne City FC stunningly booked their place in the Final after defeating Korea Republic's Hyundai Steel Red Angels Women's FC 1-0 in their Semi-final.

The opening minutes saw both sides attempting to assert control, finding early opportunities but losing momentum in the final third.

The Red Angels threatened in the fourth minute but Yuka Toriumi's effort from the left was safely collected by Melbourne City's Malena Garcia while four minutes later, Kim So-eun sent a free-kick from outside the box soaring over the bar.

Melbourne City responded with chances of their own, with Holly McNamara's 10th-minute attempt being denied by the crossbar, while Leticia McKenna's powerful free-kick was punched away by Red Angels' goalkeeper Kim Min-jung shortly after.

McNamara continued to trouble the Red Angels defence, winning the ball from Mun Ha-yeon inside the Hyundai box in the 19th minute before volleying it to Mariana Speckmaier.

The Venezuelan then slipped a short pass to McKenna, whose weak attempt from close range failed to find the opener.

At the other end, the Red Angels also squandered chances, most notably when Yoon Hye-in's sublime overhead cross was headed wide by Kim Seong-mi.



The search for the opening goal continued into the second half, with the first real threat once again coming from McNamara, who darted past several red shirts before seeing her right-footed effort from a tight angle being denied by Mun.

Speckmaier had a wonderful opportunity after the game crossed the 60-minute mark when she met Leah Davidson's cross from the left flank but her attempt from inside the box lacked power and was palmed away by Red Angels custodian Kim.

The Red Angels went close to breaking the deadlock 10 minutes later, when Japanese striker Haruhi

Suzuki's header from Yong's cross from the centre of the box was blocked by City's Garcia.

Suzuki once again made her presence felt with a left-footed strike from outside the box, but her effort sailed over the bar, while three minutes later, Seo Ji-young's close-range attempt from inside the six-yard box was deftly cleared by Garcia.

Just when it seemed extra time would be needed, McMahon produced a moment of brilliance with a stunning right-footed strike from outside the box, finding the top-right corner after being teed up by McKenna.



FINAL

MELBOURNE CITY FC (AUS) 1-1 WUHAN JIANGDA WOMEN'S FC (CHN) - AET, WUHAN JIANGDA WON 5-4 ON PENALTIES

China PR's Wuhan Jiangda Women's FC clinched the inaugural AFC Women's Champions League™ title in dramatic fashion, defeating Australia's Melbourne City FC 5-4 in a sudden death penalty shootout after the Final ended 1-1 at the end of 120 minutes.

Youngster Shelby McMahon put Melbourne ahead, but a Wang Shuang stoppage-time penalty sent the match into extra-time and eventually the shootout, with goalkeeper Chen Chen emerging Wuhan Jiangda's star with two saves.

The win meant Wuhan Jiangda also sealed their place in the inaugural FIFA Women's Champions Cup 2026.

Melbourne head coach Michael Matricciani made two changes with McMahon and Lourdes Bosch replacing Laura Hughes and Mariana Speckmaier in midfield and in attack respectively.

His counterpart, Chang Weiwei resisted restoring captain Yao Wei to the starting 11 that saw 10 players retained from their Semi-final win on Wednesday, instead opting to shore up

the midfield with Dai Chenying starting in place of forward Song Duan.

Wuhan Jiangda started on the front foot with early opportunities falling the way of Tereza Engesha, who had a shot from distance and a header, but neither were on target after some enterprising moves on the flanks.

Melbourne City took time to adjust to the high-intensity tactics adopted by the hosts, needing 20 minutes before creating their first attempt but Lourdes Bosch's low cross from the left was ballooned over by Bryleeh Henry.

The Australian side then fashioned a much better chance after Holly McNamara was put through in the 27th minute only for Wuhan Jiangda custodian Ding Xuan to win the one-on-one battle before Wang Shuang forced a back-peddling Malena Garcia to tip over in added time as the stalemate remained going into the break.

After the interval, Wuhan Jiangda replaced Ding Xuan with Chen Chen with the lanky goalkeeper quickly called into action to deny efforts from

McNamara and Henry as Melbourne City started to find gaps in their opponents' defence.

On the hour mark, Song Duan – who was sent on minutes earlier to replace the injured Dai Chenying – cut in from the left and unleashed a stinging low shot that Garcia had to push away.

The breakthrough finally came in the 76th minute with Melbourne City taking the lead thanks to a stunning McMahon header off Leticia McKenna's pinpoint free-kick delivery from the right.

With the clock winding down, Wuhan Jiangda threw caution to the wind but were fortunate not to go further behind after Henry found the back of the net just as the tie went into added time, only for the goal to be ruled out for a foul in the buildup.

The China PR side's fighting spirit was eventually rewarded in the eighth minute of stoppage time after Speckmaier handled the ball in the box. Wang Shuang stepped up to convert the spot-kick to send the match into extra time.

Despite the best efforts of both teams, extra time yielded no goals though both sides went close with Wuhan Jiangda's Kim Hye-ri and Deng Mengye denied by stout defending, while McKenna was off target by mere centimetres in the 116th minute as the tie went to penalties.

Proven shot-stopper Chen Chen lived up to her reputation in the shootout, saving attempts from Rebekah Stott and Henry to give Wuhan Jiangda the win.

Melbourne City's Stott was named the Most Valuable Player while Yuzuho Shikoshi of Urawa Red Diamond Ladies of Japan won the Top Scorer award for her haul of four goals.



TOURNAMENT RESULTS

GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
HYUNDAI STEEL RED ANGELS WOMEN'S FC (KOR)	3	2	1	0	7	2	5	7
ABU DHABI COUNTRY CLUB (UAE)	3	1	2	0	6	5	1	5
WUHAN JIANGDA WOMEN'S FC (CHN)	3	1	0	2	8	4	4	3
SABAH FA (MAS)	3	0	1	2	2	12	-10	1

Team A	Score	Team B
WUHAN JIANGDA WOMEN'S FC (CHN)	1-2 (1-0)	ABU DHABI COUNTRY CLUB (UAE)
HYUNDAI STEEL RED ANGELS WOMEN'S FC (KOR)	3-0 (3-0)	SABAH FA (MAS)
SABAH FA (MAS)	0-7 (0-3)	WUHAN JIANGDA WOMEN'S FC (CHN)
ABU DHABI COUNTRY CLUB (UAE)	2-2 (1-1)	HYUNDAI STEEL RED ANGELS WOMEN'S FC (KOR)
SABAH FA (MAS)	2-2 (1-2)	ABU DHABI COUNTRY CLUB (UAE)
WUHAN JIANGDA WOMEN'S FC (CHN)	0-2 (0-1)	HYUNDAI STEEL RED ANGELS WOMEN'S FC (KOR)

GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
MELBOURNE CITY FC (AUS)	3	3	0	0	9	1	8	9
BAM KHATOON FC (IRN)	3	1	1	1	4	4	0	4
KAYA FC-ILOILO (PHI)	3	0	2	1	1	5	-4	2
COLLEGE OF ASIAN SCHOLARS (THA)	3	0	1	2	1	5	-4	1

Team A	Score	Team B
MELBOURNE CITY FC (AUS)	2-1 (2-0)	BAM KHATOON FC (IRN)
KAYA FC-ILOILO (PHI)	0-0 (0-0)	COLLEGE OF ASIAN SCHOLARS (THA)
BAM KHATOON FC (IRN)	1-1 (1-0)	KAYA FC-ILOILO (PHI)
COLLEGE OF ASIAN SCHOLARS (THA)	0-3 (0-1)	MELBOURNE CITY FC (AUS)
MELBOURNE CITY FC (AUS)	4-0 (4-0)	KAYA FC-ILOILO (PHI)
COLLEGE OF ASIAN SCHOLARS (THA)	1-2 (1-1)	BAM KHATOON FC (IRN)

TOURNAMENT RESULTS

GROUP C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
URAWA RED DIAMONDS LADIES (JPN)	3	3	0	0	21	0	21	9
HO CHI MINH CITY WOMEN'S FC (VIE)	3	2	0	1	6	4	2	6
TAICHUNG BLUE WHALE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL TEAM (TPE)	3	1	0	2	5	5	0	3
ODISHA FOOTBALL CLUB (IND)	3	0	0	3	1	24	-23	0

Team A	Score	Team B
URAWA RED DIAMONDS LADIES (JPN)	17-0 (8-0)	ODISHA FOOTBALL CLUB (IND)
HO CHI MINH CITY WOMEN'S FC (VIE)	3-1 (0-0)	TAICHUNG BLUE WHALE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL TEAM (TPE)
TAICHUNG BLUE WHALE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL TEAM (TPE)	0-2 (0-0)	URAWA RED DIAMONDS LADIES (JPN)
ODISHA FOOTBALL CLUB (IND)	1-3 (0-2)	HO CHI MINH CITY WOMEN'S FC (VIE)
TAICHUNG BLUE WHALE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL TEAM (TPE)	4-0 (2-0)	ODISHA FOOTBALL CLUB (IND)
URAWA RED DIAMONDS LADIES (JPN)	2-0 (1-0)	HO CHI MINH CITY WOMEN'S FC (VIE)



TOURNAMENT RESULTS

QUARTER-FINALS

Team A	Score	Team B
HYUNDAI STEEL RED ANGELS WOMEN'S FC (KOR)	1-0 (0-0)	BAM KHATOON FC (IRN)
HO CHI MINH CITY WOMEN'S FC (VIE)	5-4 (0-3)	ABU DHABI COUNTRY CLUB (UAE)
MELBOURNE CITY FC (AUS)	3-0 (2-0)	TAICHUNG BLUE WHALE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL TEAM (TPE)
URAWA RED DIAMONDS LADIES (JPN)	0-0 a.e.t. (0-0,0-0)5-6 PSO	WUHAN JIANGDA WOMEN'S FC (CHN)



SEMI-FINALS

Team A	Score	Team B
WUHAN JIANGDA WOMEN'S FC (CHN)	2-0 (1-0)	HO CHI MINH CITY WOMEN'S FC (VIE)
HYUNDAI STEEL RED ANGELS WOMEN'S FC (KOR)	0-1 (0-0)	MELBOURNE CITY FC (AUS)

FINAL

Team A	Score	Team B
MELBOURNE CITY FC (AUS)	1-1 a.e.t. (1-1,0-0)4-5 PSO	WUHAN JIANGDA WOMEN'S FC (CHN)





THE WINNING COACH



CHANG'S WINNING MENTALITY

“Personally, I think having a winning mentality goes much further than physical strength and good tactics,” Chang Weiwei reflected after the Final. But, when asked by the AFC Technical Observers which match had tested his team the most, the former midfielder unhesitatingly named the Quarter-Final against Urawa Red Diamonds. “Undoubtedly, that match in Japan held a very special meaning,” he said. “The process, the pressure, the challenge, the preparation...all of it left a lasting mark on us.” Questioned about the most valuable lesson gained from the tie won in a penalty shootout, he responded: “The biggest one was our clarity of purpose. I told the players, ‘We’re here to win. Japan is like a mountain. We’re here to climb it.’ That message united the whole team. Everyone focused on their own job, gave it their all in training and came into the match with fire in their eyes. During the match, their passion was undeniable. Every ball was contested. We played 120 minutes — and every second, the players gave 100%. So it wasn’t just tactical preparation. It was psychological, emotional. Everyone knew what the goal was. And that match gave us something to remember forever. Whether they

continue playing or become coaches someday, this will be one of their most valuable, successful memories. It was a victory born of unity, discipline, and total commitment.”

Melbourne City head coach Michael Matricciani, his opponent in the Final, was impressed by Wuhan Jiangda’s tactical flexibility. “Wuhan showed really good discipline in their defensive block,” he commented, “which I was really impressed with. It showed their versatility, because normally they don’t play like that. They are usually quite expansive, quite attacking and they leave players in transition.”

“In our domestic league, we were using a 1-4-4-2 formation,” Chang explained. “But when preparing for Japan, we knew they were technically and tactically superior, both individually and as a team. After our league match, we began our training specifically with 1-5-3-2 and 1-5-4-1 formations. We focused intensively on defensive drills. We knew that if we defended well, we’d have opportunities to counter. In the end, we didn’t score, but the tactical execution was solid. Everyone was on the same page.”

THE WINNING COACH THE WINNING COACH

The next hurdle was a Semi-Final against Ho Chi Minh City in which Wuhan Jiangda, who had managed 31% of possession against Urawa Red Diamonds, enjoyed 60% of the ball. “We had collected information on the Vietnamese team, including scouting the three foreign players they had added,” Chang said. “Their squad was stronger. Because of that, our concern was whether our 1-4-4-2 system would hold up. Ultimately, we stuck with a back-five formation because their attackers had pace and skill. In particular, their No. 9 and No. 10 were dangerous, as was their No. 88, a Vietnamese winger. We anticipated Ho Chi Minh would play aggressively. That’s why we kept our five-defender system — but with a slight tweak. We didn’t push both wing-backs forward at the same time. Instead, one would go up while the other stayed back, ensuring stability on the flanks. Still, what mattered most was making sure every player clearly understood her role. Football is fluid — plans can change mid-game — but everything went smoothly.”

During the season, Chang had made two signings—Tereza Engesha and Kim Hye-ri—from Hyundai Red Angels but had also been unafraid to field less experienced youngsters such as Jiang Zhenjin. “We gave a few young players the chance to step up during this tournament,” he commented. “It was a bold but necessary move to bring in new faces because this competition was a great opportunity to train and develop them more quickly. Looking ahead, we’ll continue to take bold steps in developing young talent.”

Turning to coaching after injury forced him to hang up his boots at the age of 26, Chang’s experience alongside Luis Felipe Scolari and Fabio Cannavaro at Guangzhou Evergrande helped him to blend empathy and pragmatism with his tactical expertise. “These days, many clubs are building more robust support teams,” he explains, “including mental performance coaches, which I think are essential. Players today deal with far more psychological stress. Some even suffer from mild depression, which wasn’t common before. I believe players have to deal with thoughts and

emotions. But, rather than formal psychologists, we rely on communication. The assistant coaches and I regularly talk to players. If someone isn’t putting in full effort or seems disengaged, we’ll speak with them directly. If there’s no improvement after communication, we won’t renew their contract. We’ve built a culture where expectations are clear and accountability is part of the system. That’s why I believe our club is among the most professional in China PR. We operate with structure. Training and discipline are respected, but we also give the players autonomy. Overall, our players are deeply committed. When key moments come, they push themselves — not because they’re forced to, but because they believe in the team and the environment we’ve built. That’s what professionalism means to me. A player who stays focused, performs consistently and values the bigger goal. That’s why this competition matters. In the past, only national team players could gain international experience. Now, with the club competition, more players outside national set-ups have a platform to be seen and to grow. We’re not just playing for ourselves – we’re playing to raise the standard of the game across our Continent.”





TECHNICAL TOPICS

TECHNICAL TOPICS

BLOCKS AND BLOCKBUSTERS

As the first season of the groundbreaking club competition unfolded, one of the challenges facing AFC's Technical Observers was the lack of precedents. Comparisons with previous years were impossible and the word 'trend' needed to be spoken with great caution. But their discussions based on past experience in other competitions did identify a tendency among the top teams towards a greater focus on refining defensive strategies. More teams were equipped to adjust structures and tactics according to the characteristics of the opposition.

Champions Wuhan Jiangda were a case in point. Having come through the Group Stage in a 1-4-4-2 formation, the Observers had seen them play "a low block 1-5-4-1 with a very defensive approach against Urawa Reds in the Quarter-Final and then they adapted that to a high press against Ho Chi Minh City in the Semi-Final; then, in the Final, they pressed quite high during the first half". Melbourne City, they added, "usually pressed very high and aggressively in the front third. But in the Final, they set up a mid/high block which they organised very rapidly, with good discipline and players quickly retreating into the block as soon as the opponents played forward". Ho Chi Minh City, they had noted, also set up a deep 1-5-4-1 block but, in the Semi-Final, Wuhan Jiangda were quick to spot and exploit spaces between the lines on the occasions when the structure of the block was short on compactness. Looking back on that Semi-Final, the champions' head coach Chang



Weiwei commented: "We neutralised their strengths by staying compact, keeping tight distances between players, and speeding up our defensive pressure. We didn't give them space to make plays. That approach worked well." Before the Final, he stated: "We've been focusing on our defensive structure — positioning, marking, aerial challenges — all the details that can make a difference in moments of pressure".

Melbourne City head coach Michael Matricciani, after reflecting that "I think we've evolved into a really solid, consistent team that can adapt in many ways", acknowledged that the challenge was to break down deep defensive blocks. "Obviously some of the teams thought

that we were a little bit better than them, so they went a bit more defensive," he said. "They sat really deep and really compact and tried to make it difficult for us. So, every coach and every team tries to play in a different way to win a match. I think anyone can beat anyone. It's just how you plan your tactics to do that."



STAYING IN THE GAME

The competition, even within the confines of a 12-team format, provided a snapshot of the hierarchies in the women's game – showcasing the elite and those who occupy lower rungs on the development ladder. But, as the Observers pointed out, there were no resounding scorelines in a Knockout Stage where, even when one of the teams was evidently stronger, the opponent managed to stay in the game. Winning margins were generally slim or, in the case of Wuhan Jiangda's two shootout victories, non-existent. "Teams were not only able to implement well-organised defensive structures," the Technical Observers remarked, "but the standard of goalkeeping

was generally impressive." They highlighted the string of decisive saves made by Wuhan Jiangda's Ding Xuan as she kept a clean sheet during the Quarter-Final against Urawa Red Diamonds, while her understudy Chen Chen made important saves in the two penalty shootouts. Ho Chi Minh City keeper Quach Thu Em kept the Vietnamese team alive in the Semi-Final against Wuhan Jiangda, and Melbourne City's Malena Mieres remained unbeaten in open play, conceding only from a corner during the Group B match against Bam Khatoon and from the penalty spot in the Final. Although the Observers found words of praise for the general level of shot-stopping and reflexes, the prevalence of deep defending meant that the jury often lacked evidence for the goalkeepers' ability to cover areas outside the box or to engage actively in build-up play.

BREAKING NEWS

Preferences for deep defending could be interwoven with other threads which ran through the inaugural competition such as counterattacking, for example. In a multi-layered competition where coaches often acknowledged the opponent's superiority, springing out at speed from a deep block might be expected to reap dividends in terms of goalscoring. But, following the trend set at the AFC Women's Asian Cup India 2022™, this was not the case. Admittedly, counterattacks generated 12.5% of the competition's open-play goals (compared with 8.5% at the national team event).

But there were only two successful examples of the classic back-to-front counter from a deep position – one of them being the break initiated by the Abu Dhabi Country Club goalkeeper Jeane Bueno and finished by Naeema Ibrahim's long-range added-time winner against Wuhan Jiangda. The other also involved the eventual champions. Having clearly learned their lesson, they opened the scoring in their 7-0 defeat of Sabah by breaking out with a through pass that allowed Kabange Mupopo to run clear. The third and fifth goals by Deng Mengye were also swift counters, the former a reward for high pressing and a regain in an advanced area.

Wuhan Jiangda were punished twice more: once when a ball-loss in their defensive block allowed Yoko Tanaka to put Hyundai Red Angels ahead in their 2-0 victory and, in the competition's opening game, when a loss of possession in midfield paved the way for Naeema Ibrahim to complete a collective counter with Abu Dhabi Country Club's 90th-minute equaliser. Taichung Blue Whale were involved in the other three successful counters. The high press by Urawa Red Diamonds earned a regain in an advanced position and an opening goal for Ririka Tanno. But the team from Chinese Taipei responded when Chen Jin-wen rounded-off two collective counters from midfield, scoring the first and last goals in their 4-0 win against Odisha FC.

Perceptive readers might have noticed that the successes corresponded to the Group Stage. When the top teams faced off in the Knockout Stage, no goals were scored from counterattacks. A sentence from the Technical Report on the AFC Women's Asian Cup™ could legitimately be repeated: "Systematic counterattacking at pace was conspicuous by its absence in a tournament where defence-to-attack transitions did not stand out among the most salient features". The debating point is whether this indicates that the art of counterattacking is an area for improvement in the women's game as a whole.

PRESSURE POINTS

Some teams found it easy to play out from the back because their opponents were not subjecting them to collective high pressure. Among the top eight, Melbourne City were the stand-out exponents of intensive pressing in high areas – although, at the final tournament, the unusual heat and humidity provided a deterrent to sustained high-intensity endeavour. Hyundai Steel Red Angels and Urawa Red Diamonds showed willingness to invest in counter-pressing – although ball-winning in advanced areas was often a cue to commence another phase of possession rather than the fast counterpunch. Other teams generally displayed a preference for pressing the ball-carrier while retreating into a defensive block.

When pressed, the response from the player or team in possession was often to play long – and the table based on the percentages of long passes (30 metres or more) among the top eight teams serves as a pressure gauge.

Team	Long Passes
Abu Dhabi Country Club	33%
Bam Khatoon	33%
Taichung Blue Whale	23%
Ho Chi Minh City	18%
Wuhan Jiangda	17%
Urawa Red Diamonds	10%
Hyundai Red Angels	8%
Melbourne City	6%

As mentioned earlier, averages do not always tell the whole story. The figure posted by Abu Dhabi Country Club, for example, is hauled upwards by their match against Hyundai Red Angels in which 58% of their passes were long. Bam Khatoon's average was inflated by a 43% tally against the same opponent. Furthermore, statistics offer evidence of the pressing activities by Urawa Red Diamonds. Against the Japanese team, almost half (48%) of the passes by Taichung Blue Whale were of 30m or more, while Ho Chi Minh City and Wuhan Jiangda registered 34% and 30% respectively.





HAVING A BALL

Champions Wuhan Jiangda dominated possession in three of their six games – against Abu Dhabi Country Club, Sabah FA and Ho Chi Minh City. Among the top eight teams, Melbourne City and Urawa Red Diamonds were alone in having a greater share of the ball in all their matches. Hyundai Red Angels would have joined them but for their 43% slice of possession in the Semi-Final against Melbourne City. Otherwise, the Korea Republic side posted eye-catching data, restricting Bam Khatoon and Abu Dhabi Country Club to shares of 17% and 18% respectively. The two participants from the West in the Knockout Stage therefore spent most of the competition focused on out-of-possession mechanisms.

Much the same applied to Taichung Blue Whale who had 57% of the ball against Odisha FC but only 38% against Urawa Red Diamonds and Ho Chi Minh City and 22% against Melbourne City. But, when they did have possession, they led the field, as the table shows, in their use of the long ball. And, to quote the old saying, 'the longer the pass, the longer the odds against it being received by a team-mate'.

Statistics on pass-completion rates (passes which reach a team-mate) can sometimes be made to look respectable by innocuous passing along the back line. But, in a competition which set benchmarks for top-level club football, the pass-

completion rates in the opponent's half of the pitch are revealing. The table shows the maximum and minimum percentages (in individual matches) among the top eight teams.

Team	Max.	Min.
Melbourne City	83%	72%
Urawa Red Diamonds	82%	41%
Hyundai Red Angels	81%	65%
Taichung Blue Whale	74%	21%
Ho Chi Minh City	70%	46%
Wuhan Jiangda	66%	41%
Abu Dhabi Country Club	54%	29%
Bam Khatoon	53%	30%

The maximum figures for Taichung Blue Whale and Ho Chi Minh City were against Odisha FC. The minimum figures for Urawa Red Diamonds and Taichung Blue Whale were when they played each other. In their other fixtures, the lowest completion rates were 69% and 37% respectively.



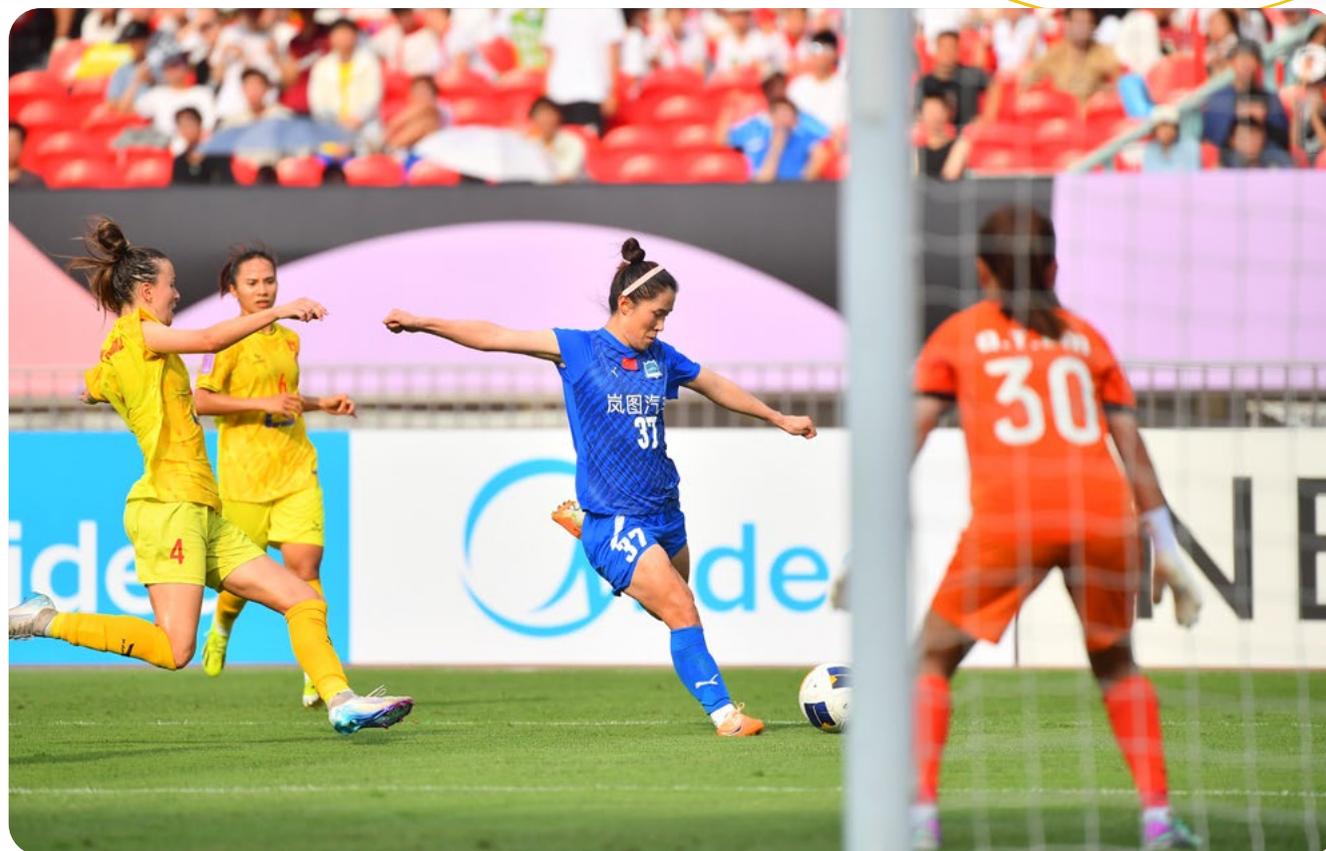
BENCH MARKS

At the age of 17, Shelby McMahon emerged from the inaugural competition as a player of high potential, playing an important role in the team as the pivotal midfielder responsible for linking defence with attack – a task she performed with ease and composure. In the Semi-Final – she started three games on the bench – she entered in the second half and scored the winner in added-time at the end. In the Final she headed her team ahead from a free kick.

Wuhan Jiangda's second-string goalkeeper Chen Chen was sent on for the penalty shootout in the Quarter-Final against Urawa Red Diamonds and made decisive saves. In the Final, injury to Ding Xuan drew her off the bench at half-time and, after making a string of good saves in the remaining 75 minutes, she again led her team to victory in the shootout.

They provided two shining examples of substitutes who made a difference during a competition where coaches had different approaches to the use of their squads. Champion Chang Weiwei exploited 29 of his 32 opportunities to inject fresh players. Lu Dinh Tuan used all five subs in four of Ho Chi Minh City's games. The two Quarter-Finalists from the West, however, adopted a different approach. Abu Dhabi Country Club's Sara Hassanien used 11 of 20 substitution opportunities; Bam Khatoon's Marziyeh Jafari only nine.

Silver-medallists Melbourne City adopted a middle-of-the-road approach, using 22 of 32 possibilities. Head coach Michael Matricciani commented: "I'm not someone that's managing the squad to give minutes to different players. They need to earn it. And I think every game that we play, we play the best players possible. Because as we know as players, you want to play, and when you're not playing, you're upset. So, they can be upset at me." The Technical Observers commented that "substitutions often stemmed from fatigue, highlighting differences in squad depth and



each coach's philosophy regarding player development". As a coach, what is your attitude to squad rotation now that an international competition has been added to club fixture lists?

BUILDING THE FUTURE

The final words belong to the champion coach of the first AFC Women's Champions League™. "Since this is the first-ever edition," Chang Weiwei told the AFC Technical Observers, "everyone sees this tournament as a milestone

— a step for women's football in Asia toward a more global and competitive stage. For clubs and national teams alike, this is an excellent platform for growth, learning, and experience. The potential is massive, but we still have a long way to go. In Europe, most national associations have well-structured women's leagues. In Asia, out of 47 Member Associations, fewer than half have regular league systems and even fewer meet AFC's minimum requirements. That's why this tournament matters. We need consistent, high-level competition. That's how you build value. That's how you build careers. And it's how Asia can keep up with Europe and the Americas."



GOALSCORING ANALYSIS

GOALSCORING ANALYSIS

A STRIKING RESEMBLANCE

History all but repeated itself. The Technical Report on the senior AFC Women's Asian Cup™ carried the proviso that "statistics were seriously distorted by Australia's 18-0 victory in their opening fixture over a young, inexperienced Indonesia team". The inaugural AFC Women's Champions League™ confirmed that similar differences in rank also exist in club football when Urawa Red Diamonds of Japan defeated Odisha FC by a 17-0 scoreline on the opening day in Group C. To their credit, the Indian team rebounded with much more dignified results in their other two games. But the impact on statistics and scoring charts was considerable. Overall, the competition produced 89 goals at 3.56 per match, but if the eye-catching scoreline is discounted, the average drops to a round figure of 3.00.

The 15 games in the Preliminary Stage, incidentally, had yielded a lower average of 2.47. In the Group Stage, the 17-0 scoreline, supplemented by Wuhan Jiangda's 7-0 victory over Sabah FA meant that one-third of the goals were scored in two matches and helped to swell the tally to 71. But 18 goals during the seven matches in the Knockout Stage (at the lesser rate of 2.57) indicate that life at the top was becoming increasingly competitive.

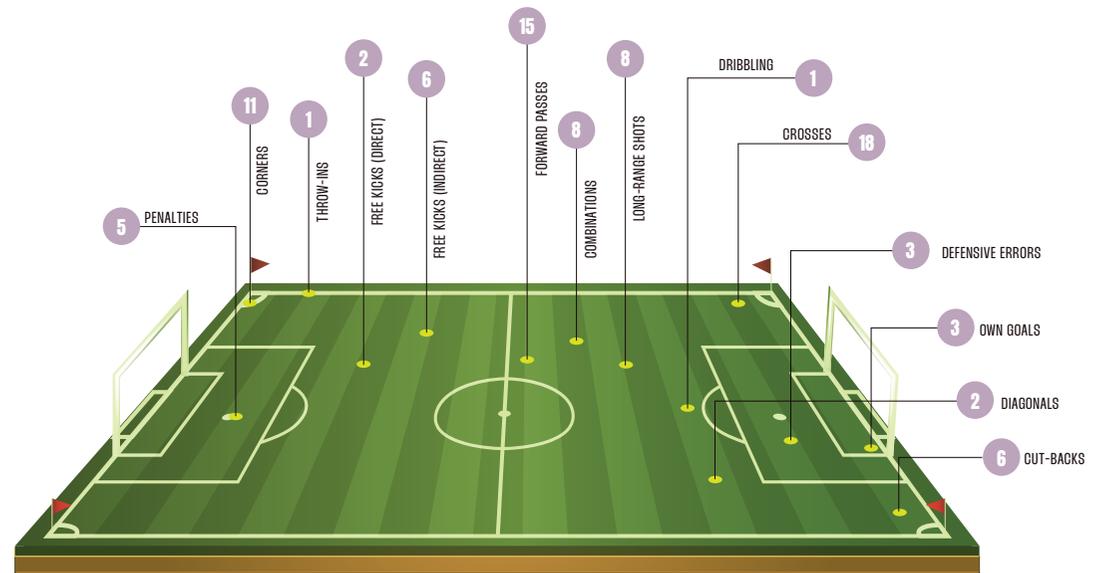
In terms of individual teams, 21 goals allowed Urawa Reds to lead the field comfortably, 50% ahead of Melbourne City's 14. But measurements of the WE League champions' goalscoring potency need to take into account that, after

30 on-target finishes in 56 shots at the Odisha goal, they scored four times in their other three matches, when only nine of the team's 52 attempts were on target. Champions Wuhan Jiangda scored 11 times in six matches – seven of them in one game and four in the other five. The moral is that the competition's overall statistics and averages can be misleading.

Having said that, 267 of the competition's 701 goal attempts were accurate – producing an average of

38% which compares favourably with other club and national team tournaments where the efficiency index habitually roams around the one-in-three mark. The competition's 89 goals meant that one in three of the accurate finishes actually hit the net. This compares with a success rate of one in seven at the AFC Women's Asian Cup™ in 2022.

The goalscoring chart breaks down the 89 goals into 14 set-play and open-play categories.



ACTION	GUIDELINES	GOALS
Corners	Direct from / following a corner	11
Free kicks (direct)	Direct from a free kick	2
Free kicks (indirect)	Following a free kick	6
Penalties	Spot kick (or follow-up from a penalty)	5
Throw-ins	Following a throw-in	1

ACTION	GUIDELINES	GOALS
Combinations	Wall pass / combination move	8
Crosses	Cross from the wing	18
Cut-backs	Pass back from the bye-line	6
Diagonals	Diagonal pass into the penalty box	2
Drizzling	Drizzling and finishing or providing an assist	1
Long-range shots	Direct shot / shot and rebound	8
Forward passes	Through pass or pass over the defence	15
Defensive errors	Bad back-pass / mistake by the goalkeeper	3
Own goals	Goal by the opponent	3

TOTAL GOALS SCORED : 89

SET PLAYS

Dead-ball scenarios generated 28% of the competition's goals, compared with 33% at national team level in India in 2022. The Technical Observers highlighted "a lack of set-play goals throughout the tournament, especially in the Group Stage" – a viewpoint which sparked further discussion in the Talking Points section of this review.

A large portion of the shortfall can be traced to the penalty spot. Five successes – including the rebound converted by Jang Chang to put Hyundai Red Angels 1-0 ahead against Sabah FA – represented 20% of the set-play total, whereas in India, the figure had been 36%.

The corner kick was the most prolific source of dead-ball successes. They were shared among six of the top eight teams – the exceptions being Taichung Blue Whale and the champions, Wuhan Jiangda. Melbourne City were the main beneficiaries, scoring four times and underlining the trend towards the in-swinging delivery. All four stemmed from corners on the left dispatched with the right foot. On the other hand, the runners-up were on the receiving end during their Group Stage opener when the right-footed delivery of a corner from the left crept into the net, allowing Bam Khatoon to score their goal in a 2-1 defeat.

The 11 goals scored from 213 corners underscored the high success rate which has prevailed in the AFC's competitions for women in recent years. The 1:19 ratio replicated the figure posted at the AFC Women's Asian Cup™ in 2022 while, at the two age-limit tournaments in 2024, success rates at corners had been less productive: 1:21 at the AFC U17 Women's Asian Cup™ and 1:35 at the U20 equivalent.

Almost one-third of the competition's set-play goals came from free kicks – 32% to be precise. Two of the eight were struck directly into the net. Both were scored by Abu Dhabi Country Club; both were executed with the left foot from

positions slightly right of centre; but they were delivered by two different players: Lidija Kulis putting them 2-1 ahead against Hyundai Red Angels, and Rashida Ibrahim hitting the first equaliser in the 2-2 draw with Sabah FA. Melbourne City claimed two of the six successes from indirect free kicks, including their goal in the Final. Shelby McMahon's finish was one of the competition's 11 headed goals – eight of which were scored from dead-ball situations. Four teams (Abu Dhabi Country Club, Ho Chi Minh City, Hyundai Red

Angels and Bam Khatoon) scored one apiece, meaning that seven of the 12 participants failed to exploit free-kick scenarios.

One goal was generated by a long throw – literally, as it was taken by Hali Long of Kaya FC-Iloilo – which was hooked by Anicka Castaneda across the Bam Khatoon box for Joyce Onrubia to strike an equaliser timed at 90+4.





Although crosses were productive, only three goals resulted from the traditional cross-plus-header formula. The scorers were Sabah FA (v Abu Dhabi), Ho Chi Minh City (v Taichung Blue Whale) and Abu Dhabi (v Ho Chi Minh City) – a statistic which suggests a general shift of preference among the top teams for low crosses or cut-backs to become the end product of penetration in wide areas. Goals from cut-backs, which had been conspicuous by their total absence at the AFC Women's Asian Cup™, provided almost one in ten of the open-play goals in the club competition.

Although statistical evidence points clearly towards the wings as the most fertile source of goals, the success rate from through passes (23% of open-play goals compared with 21% at the national team event in 2022) arguably reflects a desire to avoid predictability – as does the tally of goals attributable to combination moves through central areas: 12.5% of the open-play total compared with 7% in India. The percentage could be enhanced by, for example, Wuhan Jiangda's second goal in the Semi-Final when an excellent combination move culminated in Tereza Engesha setting up Song Duan's shooting opportunity.

That goal, however, was computed as one of the long-range successes which accounted for a further 12.5% of the open-play total and – more importantly – crucial goals at the top end of the competition. Such as the two which pulled Ho Chi Minh City back from a 4-2 deficit in the Quarter-Final against Abu Dhabi Country Club. And, more especially, the unstoppable right-footed long-distance strike by Australia's Shelby McMahan into the top corner which, with 90+4 on the clock, defeated a Hyundai Red Angels who, at that moment, had eight outfielders defending the penalty box. The decisive goal underlined the importance of strong long-range shooting which can make the difference against opponents who defend in a deep block.

OPEN PLAY

The inaugural AFC Women's Champions League™ followed in the footsteps of other competitions by reiterating the value of wing play in the fabrication of goals. Crosses provided 28% of open-play goals (compared with 31% at the AFC Women's Asian Cup™) and, if cut-backs and diagonals into the box are included, deliveries from wide areas accounted for 41%. The slice could be enlarged to 45% if we include the three own goals – all of which stemmed from crosses, including the unfortunate back-header from a high cross which sealed Ho Chi Minh City's 5-4 victory over Abu Dhabi Country Club in the Quarter-Finals.

Statistics related to crossing illustrate the variety in styles of play. Hyundai Red Angels and Urawa Red Diamonds delivered, on average, 27 crosses per game, followed by Ho Chi Minh City (19), Wuhan Jiangda (16) and Melbourne City (12). The two Quarter-Finalists from the West, by contrast, adopted a different attacking approach. Abu Dhabi Country Club averaged four crosses per game while Bam Khatoon delivered an overall average of six – most of their tally in the Group Stage match against College of Asian Scholars and none against Melbourne City. Whereas Odisha allowed opponents to deliver 35 crosses per game, Melbourne City's defence of wide areas was illustrated by an average of 11.

TOP GOALS

OPEN PLAY

Ranking	Player	No.	Country / Region	Match	Time	Type
1	Shelby McMahon	12	Australia	Hyundai Steel Red Angels v Melbourne City FC	90' + 4'	Long-range Shot
2	Tereza Engesha Obunyu	11	Korea Republic	Abu Dhabi Country Club v Hyundai Steel Red Angels	34'	Cross
3	Song Duan	37	China PR	Wuhan Jiangda Women's FC v Ho Chi Minh City	54'	Long-range Shot
4	Princella Adubea	34	UAE	Ho Chi Minh City v Abu Dhabi Country Club	3'	Long-range Shot
5	Maho Tanaka	14	Chinese Taipei	Taichung Blue Whale WFT v Odisha Football Club	45'	Combination Play

SET PLAY

Ranking	Player	No.	Country / Region	Match	Time	Type
1	Lidija Kulis	12	UAE	Abu Dhabi Country Club v Hyundai Steel Red Angels	55'	Direct Free-kick
2	Shelby McMahon	12	Australia	Melbourne City FC v Wuhan Jiangda Women's FC	76'	Indirect Free-kick
3	Mona Hamoudi	23	Islamic Republic of Iran	Melbourne City FC v Bam Khattoon FC	70'	Corner Kick
4	Nguyen Thi Kim Yen	28	Vietnam	Odisha Football Club v Ho Chi Minh City	1'	Corner Kick
5	Joyce Onrubia	22	Philippines	Bam Khattoon FC v Kaya FC-Iloilo	90' + 4'	Throw-in



TALKING POINTS

TALKING POINTS

GLOBAL STRATEGY?

The highly-acclaimed premiere of the AFC Women's Champions League™ has inserted an international element into the agenda of top-level club coaches. And the Technical Observers at the centralised Finals in Wuhan pointed out that the top eight in the new competition embarked on the critical stages of the campaign when they were at completely different stages of their domestic seasons, with calendar-year schedules, for example, not dovetailing neatly with the October-to-May time span of the new international competition. "This was particularly evident when you compared the levels of fitness across the eight teams from the Quarter-Final stage onwards," they noted.

Wuhan Jiangda, for example, hosted the final tournament when they were halfway through their Chinese Women's Super League season with weekly competitive matches and had just finished the Group Stage in the China PR's National Games which are disputed every four years. For Chang Weiwei, the challenge was therefore rest, recovery and squad rotation. "It was a tight schedule of matches every other day," he commented. "Our starting players had borne the brunt of it and it had left them physically and mentally drained. Players complained of fatigue, so we extended the rest days and resumed with light training."

By contrast, Ho Chi Minh City's domestic season had yet to get under way. Melbourne City had completed their domestic season the week before travelling to Wuhan,



having narrowly missed out on Australian football's Grand Final. "We were very disappointed," Michael Matricciani admitted, "but it gave us time to prepare. If we had made the Grand Final, we would have played on the Saturday and the big challenge would have been to get to Wuhan on the Monday morning and play on Wednesday."

The talking point is whether the MAs, clubs and coaches who gain entry into the AFC competition will need to devise a more global strategy with regard to player recruitment, squad rotation and longer-term periodisation with a view to ensuring that player fitness levels are optimal for the critical stages of the AFC Women's Champions League™ – which are already locked into the 2025/26 calendar.

A GENERATION GAME?

In the No. 12 shirt: Shelby McMahon, just turned 17. Wearing the No. 23 jersey: Melissa Barbieri, aged 45. The Melbourne City squad featured one of the longest generational bridges ever seen in the game of football. McMahon, the scorer of both of her team's goals in the Semi-Final and the Final, had just completed her second season in Australia's A-League Women. 'Bubs' Barbieri was completing her AFC Pro Diploma course, preparing for a coaching career while still contributing on the field of play, challenging stereotypes about age and proving that elite professionalism has no expiry date. "She and Rebekah have been absolutely amazing for me along with many of the leadership group," said Matricciani. "Those two are top, top professionals," – the latter being defender Rebekah Stott, who won the AFC's MVP Award in Wuhan.

McMahon's budding career has not been entirely injury-free – underscoring the need for clubs to take special care with load management, avoiding overuse symptoms during the crucial transitional phase between youth and senior football during the physical maturation process. What is best practice when it comes to reconciling the competitive demands of senior football with the desire to field players of outstanding potential, long-term athlete development and injury prevention?

The contributions by McMahon and Barbieri provided a cue for debate about the value of veterans and the development of promising young talent. Are we retiring experienced players too soon? How important are leadership and mentorship – the ability to guide young players like McMahon through the demands of high-pressure tournament football? Should more veterans be encouraged to take on the Barbieri role in accelerating team culture, player development and tactical understanding?



And, from a coaching perspective, can Melbourne City's approach set benchmarks in terms of blending youth and experience to foster short-term competitiveness at the top level and, at the same time, long-term player development?

KEEP THE DEAD BALL ALIVE?

"Overall, there was a lack of set-play goals throughout the competition, especially in the Group Stage" – the words from the Technical Observers' notebook triggered

discussion. Asked to elaborate, they added: "Some of the teams' set-play mechanisms were not well organised. And opportunities in goalscoring situations were often wasted. Goalkeeping has also evolved a lot over the past few years and their ability to deal with set-play deliveries has improved dramatically."

As the Goalscoring Analysis section of this review points out, dead-ball situations emerged as important factors in the closing stages of the competition when the top teams came face to face. In the Final, Melbourne City opened the

scoring with a fine header from a well-delivered free kick. Wuhan Jiangda equalised (and won the title in a shoot-out) from the penalty spot. "When games are evenly matched and competitive," the Technical Observers noted, "and it is not easy to score because the defence is well-organised, set plays are a very crucial pathway to goal in high-level matches."

The talking point is quite simple: How much training-ground time should the coach devote to rehearsals of attacking mechanisms in dead-ball situations?



TEAM PROFILES

MELBOURNE CITY FC

Jsy No.	Popular Name	Date of Birth	Position
1	SOPHIA VARLEY	22-07-2003	Goalkeeper
5	TAYLOR OTTO	23-10-1997	Defender
6	LETICIA MCKENNA	07-08-2002	Midfielder
7	KATHRYN HARVEY	09-06-1997	Forward
8	ALEXIA APOSTOLAKIS	16-05-2006	Defender
9	HOLLY MCNAMARA	23-01-2003	Forward
10	RHIANNA POLLICINA	09-02-1997	Midfielder
11	EMILIA MURRAY	11-11-2004	Forward
12	SHELBY MCMAHON	13-05-2008	Midfielder
13	REBEKAH STOTT	17-06-1993	Defender
14	LAURA HUGHES	06-06-2001	Midfielder
15	KIERA MEYERS	22-06-2007	Midfielder
16	KARLY ROESTBAKKEN	17-01-2001	Defender
17	MARIANA SPECKMAIER	26-12-1997	Midfielder
18	LEAH DAVIDSON	28-03-2001	Midfielder
19	LOURDES BOSCH	17-08-2001	Forward
20	CAITLIN KARIC	20-06-2005	Forward
21	ISABELLA ACCARDO	10-10-2005	Forward
22	BRYLEE HENRY	05-05-2003	Forward
23	MELISSA BARBIERI	20-01-1980	Goalkeeper
24	MALENA GARCIA	29-03-2000	Goalkeeper
27	TYLA JAY VLAJNIC	06-11-1990	Defender
31	CARINA ROSSI	21-08-2007	Defender



FORMATION: 1-4-3-3 / 1-3-5-2



COACH MICHAEL MATRICCIANI (AUS)

A former player with Adelaide United and India's Chirag United, Michael Matricciani coached Adelaide City in the National Premier League until the end of the 2020 season. Prior to this, the 39-year-old spent three years as head coach of Football SA NTC Girls and was named the Women's National Premier League's Coach of the Year in 2018. Matricciani also served as Technical Director at Campbelltown City SC from 2013 to 2016 and was their head coach from 2022 to 2024 before taking over Melbourne City FC.



KEY FEATURES

- **Patient, Possession-Based Build-Up:** Goalkeeper and two centre-backs initiate build-up, supported by a deep-lying defensive midfielder for stability.
- **Full-back & Wide Rotation:** Full-backs push high, particularly the right-side, interchanging dynamically with midfielders to underlap and overlap.
- **Half-Space Occupation:** Two central midfielders rotate into half-spaces, linking play between defence and attack. Another central midfielder will push high to the same level with the striker.
- **Forward Movement:** The striker aggressively exploits defensive lines with diagonal runs, creating space for central midfielders to advance.
- **Combination Play:** In the final third, central midfielders, wide midfielders, and the forward combine in tight spaces around the box, utilising quick passes or overlaps on both flanks.
- **Instant Collective Press:** Upon losing possession, the team immediately transitions into a coordinated high press to regain the ball as quickly as possible.
- **High-Block Pressing with front triggers:** The forward line (three players) presses aggressively, forcing play wide. From the opponent's goal-kick, pressing in 1-4-4-2 to force the play outside.
- **Individual marking on Flanks:** Nearby players mark tightly to isolate opponents in the wide zones.
- **Sweeper Keeper Role:** Goalkeeper stays high to cover behind the defensive line.
- **Structured Recovery:** If pressing is bypassed, the team quickly reorganises while maintaining constant pressure on the ball.
- **Counterattacking & Possession:** The forward sprints behind defensive lines when space opens. Preference for controlled build-up over rushed counters, recycling play if no clear transition opportunity arises.
- **Set Pieces:** Height advantage, but delivery was inconsistent in finding the target.

KEY PLAYERS

24	Malena Garcia	Stable with leadership qualities, providing influence and instruction in defending. Good saves and correct decisions.
13	Rebekah Stott	Solid and calm, good distribution from the back, physically strong in 1v1 duels and good leadership qualities.
12	Shelby McMahon	A very young talent, with all-round comprehensive ability as a midfielder, reading the game and providing the link and scoring ability to change the game.

ABOUT THE TEAM

Founded in 2015, Melbourne City FC quickly established themselves as a powerhouse in Australian women's football, boasting an impressive record comprising four W-League/A-League Women Premiership titles, including consecutive wins in 2023/24 and 2024/25. They have also won four W-League/A-League Women Championship titles.

Melbourne City finished Group B of the AFC Women's Champions League™ 2024/25 at the top, unbeaten and with maximum points. They inflicted a 3-0 defeat on Taichung Blue Whale Women's Football Team in the Quarter-Finals to set up a meeting with Hyundai Steel Red Angels Women's FC, where they won 1-0 to march into the Final.

The Australians took the lead against the home side Wuhan Jiangda Women's FC in the 76th minute but conceded a penalty in the last minute of regulation time, and eventually finished runners-up after losing 5-4 in sudden death during the penalty shootout.

WUHAN JIANGDA WOMEN'S FC (CHN)

Jsy No.	Popular Name	Date of Birth	Position
1	YU SIJIN	14-04-2003	Goalkeeper
5	WU HAIYAN	26-02-1993	Defender
6	XIE TING	10-05-1998	Midfielder
7	WANG SHUANG	23-01-1995	Forward
8	LI TINGTING	03-04-1995	Forward
9	SARATOU TRAORE	27-09-2002	Midfielder
10	YAO WEI	01-09-1997	Midfielder
12	TANG HAN	03-01-2001	Defender/Midfielder/Forward
13	XU QIANQIAN	03-10-2000	Defender
14	ZHU HONGGUO	14-01-1993	Midfielder
15	LIU YANQIU	31-12-1995	Defender
17	SUN XIAOYU	15-10-1998	Defender
18	MA JUN	06-03-1989	Defender
20	QIN MANMAN	11-03-1997	Midfielder
21	DAI CHENYING	15-02-1997	Midfielder
22	CHEN CHEN	26-06-1993	Goalkeeper
26	JIANG CHENJING	23-01-2004	Defender/Midfielder/Forward
27	DENG MENGYE	25-12-2001	Forward
28	SONG FEI	03-11-1997	Defender
29	DING XUAN	11-02-1989	Goalkeeper
30	WANG QIANQIAN	22-01-2003	Forward
31	ZHANG HAO	16-11-1997	Goalkeeper
32	ZHAO YUXIN	29-04-1998	Defender
33	TEREZA ENGESHA OBUNYU	15-02-1998	Forward
36	ZHAO JINGYI	03-03-2002	Defender/Midfielder/Forward
37	SONG DUAN	02-08-1995	Forward
46	HUANG BAOYING	23-06-2005	Defender
47	DU JIANQUN	01-10-2005	Defender/Midfielder/Forward
61	WANG YUMENG	13-02-2001	Defender/Midfielder/Forward
90	KIM HYE-RI	25-06-1990	Defender



FORMATION: 1-5-4-1/1-4-4-2



COACH

CHANG WEIWEI (CHN)

A former midfielder with Chengdu Wuniu, Chongqing Lifan and Hubei Wuhan FC, Chang Weiwei began his coaching career as assistant coach with Hubei Wuhan before accepting the same role with China PR's women's national team in 2013 and helped them reach the Quarter-Finals of the FIFA Women's World Cup 2015. The now 51-year-old became assistant coach with Guangzhou Evergrande the same year before moving to Wuhan Jiangda as their head coach six years later, leading them to back-to-back league and cup doubles in 2022 and 2023.



KEY FEATURES

- **Build-Up & Possession:** Mix of progressive play through the thirds and long direct balls targeting a fast, strong lone striker for hold-up play.
- **Attacking Threat:** Relies on quick counterattacks, with 1-2 supporting runners joining the striker to create chances.
- **Width & Overlaps:** Full-backs overlap aggressively, especially on the right, to create overloads and deliver crosses.
- **Chance Creation:** Wide play and crosses are the main source of opportunities; minimal central penetration.
- **Half-Space Use:** Wide midfielders drift inside into half-spaces when full-backs overlap, combining with the striker and midfielders to disrupt the defensive shape.
- **Possession Retention:** Fast transitions and support in numbers take priority over slow build-up.
- **Fluid Movement:** Frequent rotations in attack; No. 7 plays inverted on the right to open passing/shooting lanes.
- **Defensive Shape:** Compact 1-5-4-1 block, forcing play wide and denying central access to invite counterattack chances.
- **Pressing & Transition:** Immediate pressure after losing the ball, followed by quick recovery into a deep block.
- **Aerial Ability:** Strong in aerial duels, effective at defending high balls.
- **Tempo & Style Variation:** Tactical flexibility, either controlled possession or direct counters using diagonal switches.

KEY PLAYERS

7	Wang Shuang	A left-footed player, mobile and very good technically with 1v1 skills and good set piece delivery.
9	Saratou Traoré	Skilful, good pace and dribbling and reading the game with excellent passing.
33	Tereza Obuyu	Fast and strong on the ball with ability to hold up the ball to bring others into play.

ABOUT THE TEAM

Founded in 2001, Wuhan Jiangda won the 2017 China Women's League One title to gain promotion to the China Women's Super League for the first time. They finished fourth in 2018 but now have an impressive five consecutive league titles to their name, beginning from 2020; five of their players were selected for the FIFA Women's World Cup 2019.

Wuhan Jiangda qualified for the AFC Women's Champions League™ 2024/25 as 2023 league champions and made the Quarter-Finals after advancing as the best third-placed team. They beat Urawa Red Diamond Ladies 6-5 on penalties to advance to the Semi-Finals, where they dominated Ho Chi Minh City Women's FC of Vietnam in a 2-0 win.

The Final saw Wuhan Jiangda win the inaugural AFC Women's Champions League™ title in dramatic fashion, defeating Melbourne City FC of Australia 5-4 in a sudden death penalty shootout after their match ended 1-1 at the close of 120 minutes.

🇰🇷 HYUNDAI STEEL RED ANGELS WOMEN'S FC (KOR)

Jsy No.	Popular Name	Date of Birth	Position
1	SEONG SEOUL-SEORABEOL	03-08-2002	Goalkeeper
4	KANG YE-JIN	19-03-2002	Defender
5	KO YOO-JIN	24-01-1997	Defender
6	MUN HA-YEON	27-05-2002	Defender
7	KIM MYEONG-JIN	20-12-2002	Midfielder
8	JANG CHANG	21-06-1996	Midfielder
9	SEO JI-YOUN	20-05-1995	Forward
11	KIM SO-EUN	20-09-1998	Forward
12	PARK AH-YUN	15-03-2002	Forward
13	KIM SEONG-MI	02-04-1997	Forward
14	OH YEON-HEE	17-07-1994	Midfielder
17	JEONG YU-JIN	25-12-2000	Defender
18	KIM JUNG-MI	16-10-1984	Goalkeeper
19	YOON HYE-IN	14-11-1999	Defender
21	CHOI JI-NA	06-05-1998	Forward
22	LEE DEOK-JU	26-12-2000	Defender
24	LEE SO-HEE	17-11-1997	Midfielder
26	LIM SEON-JOO	27-11-1990	Defender
27	NAMGUNG YE-JI	17-04-1996	Midfielder
28	KIM MIN-SEO	23-11-2002	Midfielder
32	YUKA TORIUMI	26-07-1996	Forward
33	KIM MIN-JUNG	12-09-1996	Goalkeeper
39	HARUHI SUZUKI	03-09-1999	Forward
46	BAE YE-BIN	07-12-2004	Midfielder



FORMATION: 1-4-4-2



COACH

HUR JUNG-JAE (KOR)

Hur Jung-jae was head coach for various Korea Republic women's youth teams, including their Under-14s and Under-16s. The now 56-year-old led the East Asians to third place at the AFC U-19 Women's Championship 2019 and the runners-up spot at the AFC U-16 Women's Championship 2017. Hur took over from long-time Red Angels head coach Kim Eun-sook at the Knockout Stage of the AFC Women's Champions League™ 2024/25.



KEY FEATURES

- **Attacking Width & Overlaps:** Use of aggressive overlapping runs from the full-backs, particularly on the right side, to create overloads and deliver crosses.
- **Primary Chance Creation:** Relied heavily on wide play, with crossing and finishing as the main source of scoring opportunities.
- **Half-Space Occupation:** The wide midfielders drift inside into the half-spaces, combining with the striker and supporting midfielders to disrupt the defensive lines.
- **Fluid Interchange:** Constant positional rotations in the attacking third, especially between the two central front players to create passing lanes and disrupt the opposition.
- **Possession-Based Build-Up:** Prefer structured, patient buildup to break down opponents rather than direct or counterattacking play.
- **High Press & Defensive Transition:** Apply immediate pressure on the ball carrier after losing possession, with quick recovery into a compact defensive shape.
- **Rest Defence Vulnerability:** Sometimes prone to counterattacks due to the high positioning of full-backs and midfielders.
- **Defensive Organisation:** 1-4-5-1 shape in both phases but compression into a tighter block closer to goal, forcing play wide and denying central penetration.
- **Pressing & Ball Recovery:** Aggressive pressing across the pitch, aiming to win possession quickly and restart controlled build-up.
- **Aerial Strength:** Comfortable defending high balls, with strong aerial presence in duels.
- **Possession Retention:** Priority to keep the ball after regains, opting for structured progression rather than quick counterattacks.
- **Tempo & Style:** Controlled, possession game with minimal long balls or diagonal switches.

KEY PLAYERS

11	Kim So-eun	Impressive 1v1 attacking; delivered dangerous crosses
8	Jang Chang	Key player in set-piece delivery and dangerous around the edge of the box

ABOUT THE TEAM

Hyundai Steel Red Angels Women's FC are Korea Republic's most successful women's team, with 11 consecutive WK League titles—the last of which was achieved in 2023. The club, which finished fourth in 2024, are also five-time winners of the President's Cup (Women's Division) and participated twice in the AFC Women's Club Championship™, emerging runners-up in 2023 after losing to Urawa Red Diamonds.

The Red Angels topped Group A unbeaten in the AFC Women's Champions League™ 2024/25 and defeated Bam Khatoon FC of the Islamic Republic of Iran 1-0 in the Quarter-Finals. Their continental run, however, ended in the Semi-Finals when they lost 1-0 to Melbourne City FC.

HO CHI MINH CITY WOMEN'S FC (VIE)

Jsy No.	Popular Name	Date of Birth	Position
1	DOAN THI NGOC PHUONG	01-02-1998	Goalkeeper
2	DO THI THUY KIEU	08-05-1997	Defender
3	NGUYEN THI THUY LINH	29-06-2006	Defender
4	AUBREY GOODWILL	01-10-1998	Defender
5	DANH LAM KIM PHUNG	14-02-2003	Midfielder
6	NGO THI HONG NHUNG	06-09-2000	Forward
7	NGUYEN THI NGOC DUYE	15-08-2003	Forward
8	CU THI HUYNH NHU	07-08-2000	Midfielder
9	HUYNH NHU	28-11-1991	Forward
10	PHAN THI TRANG	20-10-1995	Midfielder
11	K' THUA	13-08-2003	Forward
12	SAKURA YOSHIDA	25-10-2000	Midfielder
15	PHAM THUY AN	30-07-2000	Defender
16	NGUYEN HOANG NAM MI	24-06-2003	Midfielder
17	TRAN THI THU THAO	15-01-1993	Midfielder
18	NGUYEN THI TUYET NGAN	10-02-2000	Forward
19	CHUONG THI KIEU	19-08-1995	Defender
20	CHELSEA LE	14-09-2001	Midfielder
24	SABRINA CABRERA	14-11-2001	Forward
27	DANH THI KIEU MY	11-01-2004	Goalkeeper
28	NGUYEN THI KIM YEN	26-06-2002	Forward
30	QUACH THU EM	15-08-1995	Goalkeeper
31	ASHLEY TONTHAT	04-12-2002	Midfielder
36	NGUYEN THI NHU Y	15-05-2003	Defender
66	MARIA KHAN	09-11-1990	Midfielder
72	TRAN NGUYEN BAO CHAU	24-03-1991	Midfielder
88	TRAN THI THUY TRANG	08-08-1988	Midfielder
99	THI BICH CHAM	27-09-2005	Defender



FORMATION: 1-5-3-2



COACH

LU DINH TUAN (VIE)

A former Vietnamese international, Lu Dinh Tuan began his coaching career with Ho Chi Minh City FC in 2007 until 2009 and served two other stints with the club from 2010-12 and 2015-16. He was also head coach for Vietnam at the AFC U-22 Championship 2013 and assistant coach at both the AFC U-23 Championship 2018 and AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019™. The 57-year-old took over from Nguyen Hong Pham as head coach after the AFC Women's Champions League™ 2024/25 Quarter-Finals.



KEY FEATURES

- **Build-up Play:** From the three centre-backs, both wing-backs go high and wide to stretch the opposition, while two defensive midfielders act as double pivot to provide passing lanes, switch play and progress possession.
- **Frontline Fluidity:** The two forwards and attacking midfielder rotate flexibly, dropping into half-spaces to receive, turn, and combine. In defensive transition the shape is 1-5-4-1, with the No. 24 staying high and others dropping slightly deeper.
- **Wide Overloads:** Aiming to create numerical advantages on the flanks, linking with overlapping wing-backs to deliver crosses.
- **Box Penetration:** Attacking midfielder makes late runs into the box, while the far-side wing-back attacks the back post.
- **Second Ball Presence:** One defensive midfielder pushes to the edge of the box to recycle loose balls or disrupt defensive clearances.
- **Immediate Press:** The nearest player applies instant pressure upon losing possession, with team-mates providing support – this is not always done collectively, leaving space to play through.
- **Quick Reorganisation:** If the press is bypassed, the team drops into a structured mid-block defensive shape.
- **Mid-Block Compactness:** Defence in a mid-block, selectively pressing when triggered.
- **Back Five Adjustment:** Wing-backs drop to form a back five, while one forward occasionally tucks into midfield to maintain balance.
- **Direct Counter Threat:** Looking to play the long ball quickly to the forwards to launch counterattacks, with attacking midfielder and supporting midfielders surging forward as passing options.
- **Possession Retention:** If no counter is on, the team recycles possession and restarts controlled build-up unless forced to play long by high pressing.

KEY PLAYERS

30	Quach Thu Em	Good in defence, made many saves and blocks, claimed many crosses. Good distribution via long passes with left foot in attacking.
19	Chuong Thi Kieu	Good leadership as captain, solid defending with strong headers and good distribution in switching play.

ABOUT THE TEAM

Founded in 1998, Ho Chi Minh City Women's FC are Vietnam's most successful women's team. They first won the Vietnamese Women's National League in 2002 and clinched their 13th league title in 2024, which also marked their sixth consecutive crown. Ho Chi Minh City have also captured four Vietnamese Women's National Cups, the most recent coming in 2025.

The club closed out Group C as runners-up in the AFC Women's Champions League™ 2024/25 and produced a stunning comeback from 3-0 down to beat Abu Dhabi Country Club 5-4 in the Quarter-Finals. However, they stumbled in their Semi-Final against Wuhan Jiangda Women's FC and exited the competition after losing 2-0.

ODISHA FC (IND)

Jsy No.	Popular Name	Date of Birth	Position
1	SHREYA HOODA	25-05-1999	Goalkeeper
3	ARIFA ZAHEER SAYED	17-02-1998	Defender
4	KRETINA SANGMA	26-10-2004	Defender
5	MARYAM JUKE IBRAHIM	12-12-1995	Defender
7	KAJOL HUBERT	28-04-2006	Midfielder
8	KIRAN PISDA	16-08-2001	Midfielder
9	LYNDA KOM	28-02-2005	Forward
11	JENNIFER YEBOAH	01-12-2001	Forward
12	ANJALI ASHOK BARKE	22-07-2003	Goalkeeper
13	BANNYA KABIRAJ	27-02-2002	Midfielder
15	MALATI MUNDA	15-02-2004	Forward
17	MUNIKA MINZ	01-07-2001	Defender
18	AISHWARYA JAGTAP	04-10-2000	Forward
19	NEHA SILLAYA	19-05-2006	Forward
21	NIMITA GURUNG	05-08-1998	Defender
25	KAJAL KANTIWAL	12-01-2005	Defender
27	NISHKA PARKASH	30-12-2004	Defender
31	MANJU GANJHU	05-06-2003	Goalkeeper
38	SULEKHA KANHAR	11-02-2007	Defender



ABOUT THE TEAM

Founded in 2022, Odisha FC made their debut in the 2022/23 Odisha Women's League and promptly won top honours with a perfect 10 wins from as many matches. They qualified for the 2022/23 Indian Women's League but were knocked out in the Quarter-Finals, only to achieve a remarkable milestone by bouncing back to claim their first league title the following season.

Odisha FC made their appearance at the AFC Women's Champions League™ 2024/25 Group Stage after topping their group with a maximum of six points in the Preliminary Stage, but found the going tough in Group C with three losses to exit the tournament.

COACH

CRISPIN CHETTRI (IND)

A former player with Mohun Bagan Super Giant and United SC as well as a state representative, Crispin Chettri represented the India's Under-19s at the AFC Youth Championship qualifiers in 2000. The now 50-year-old landed his first coaching gig as the assistant manager of Mohammedan SC before moving up to head coach of Sethu FC in 2021 and joining Odisha a year later.





BAM KHATOON FC (IRN)

Jsy No.	Popular Name	Date of Birth	Position
1	MAHDIYEH MOLAEI	29-01-1991	Goalkeeper
2	SOMAYEH ASADIAN	21-09-1989	Defender
3	SOHA KARAMSHAHI	04-02-2008	Defender
4	MELIKA MOTEVALLI	06-05-1998	Defender
6	ZAHRA SARBALI	13-08-1993	Midfielder
7	FATEMEH GERAELI	30-01-1999	Midfielder
8	SARSHIN KAMANGAR	13-02-1995	Defender
9	ZAHRA GHANBARI	04-03-1992	Forward
10	ATEFEH RAMEZANIZADEH	21-04-1992	Midfielder
11	SAMANEH CHAHKANDI	28-03-1989	Midfielder
12	RAHA YAZDANI	01-07-1987	Goalkeeper
13	FATEMEH AMINEH	03-06-1997	Defender
14	FATEMEH PASANDIDEH	08-04-2004	Midfielder
17	SHAHNAZ JAFARIZADEH	16-03-1994	Defender
20	NEGIN ZANDI	20-01-2004	Forward
23	MONA HAMOUDI	11-11-1993	Midfielder
24	TAHEREH PIROUZI	31-03-2004	Forward
70	SARA DIDAR	27-11-2004	Midfielder
71	AREFEH KAZEMI	26-02-1998	Goalkeeper
99	MARYAM DINI	12-03-2007	Midfielder



ABOUT THE TEAM

Founded in 1980, Bam Khatoon FC have a rich history in women's football, having participated in the AFC Women's Club Championship™ in 2022 and 2023. The team clinched the 2023/24 domestic league trophy, marking a record 10th title since 2011 and their third consecutive victory. The Iranian outfit qualified for the AFC Women's Champions League™ by topping Group D of the Preliminary Stage with a perfect record.

Bam Khatoon finished second in Group B of the AFC Women's Champions League™ 2024/25 to make the Quarter-Finals, where they lost 1-0 to Korea Republic's Hyundai Steel Red Angels Women's FC.

COACH

MARZIYEH JAFARI BARAVATI (IRN)

Marziyeh Jafari has been the guiding force behind Bam Khatoon's success, joining them in 2008 and guiding them to promotion to the top flight in 2009, before going on to win the first of 10 league titles in 2011. The 42-year-old Bam native, who tried her hand at coaching at just 17, also led the club to their runners-up spot at the AFC Women's Club Championship™ in 2022 and is the most decorated women's coach in the Islamic Republic of Iran.



● URAWA RED DIAMONDS LADIES (JPN)

Jsy No.	Popular Name	Date of Birth	Position
1	SAKIKO IKEDA	08-09-1992	Goalkeeper
2	YU ENDO	29-10-1997	Defender
3	RION ISHIKAWA	04-07-2003	Defender
4	WAKABA GOTO	04-06-2001	Defender
5	MIKI ITO	10-09-1995	Midfielder
6	AKARI KURISHIMA	14-09-1994	Midfielder
12	SHIORI FUKUDA	13-06-2002	Goalkeeper
13	REINA NAGASHIMA	12-09-1998	Defender
14	FUKA TSUNODA	24-10-2004	Midfielder
15	MEI SHIMADA	08-05-2002	Forward
17	HANON NISHIO	27-04-2003	Forward
18	HANAE SHIBATA	27-07-1992	Midfielder
19	YUZUHO SHIOKOSHI	01-11-1997	Midfielder
20	ENA TAKATSUKA	18-06-2004	Midfielder
22	RAIKA OKAMURA	30-07-2005	Defender
23	MAYA INO	29-09-2000	Goalkeeper
24	AMI TAKEUCHI	16-12-2005	Midfielder
26	RIRIKA TANNO	10-07-2003	Midfielder
32	KANON AKIMOTO	20-05-2006	Defender
35	YOSHINO MAEHARA	20-05-2006	Forward
36	SATOKO FUJISAKI	01-11-2006	Forward



ABOUT THE TEAM

Founded in 1998, Urawa Red Diamonds Ladies made headlines in 2023 by winning the AFC Women's Club Championship™ on their debut. They have also demonstrated their dominance in Japanese women's football by claiming six top flight titles, including two consecutive Japan Women's Empowerment (WE) League crowns in 2022/23 and 2023/24, along with three domestic cup trophies.

Urawa Red Diamonds qualified for the AFC Women's Champions League™ 2024/25 Quarter-Finals after topping Group C with maximum points, finishing as the only side not to concede in the Group Stage and scoring a tournament-leading 21 goals. Their stellar run, however, ended at the last eight when they lost 6-5 on penalties to China PR's Wuhan Jiagda Women's FC.

COACH

NAOKI KUSUNOSE (JPN)

A former defender with Tokyo Verdy and Honda FC from 1987 to 1995, Naoki Kusunose began his coaching career in 2003 with youth side Verdy SS Oyama before going on to lead the Tokyo Verdy youth side from 2010 to 2011, where he won the national championship in both years.

Joining J1 League outfit FC Machida Zelvia as academy director in 2012, he was appointed caretaker of the senior side in 2012 and once more in 2013. In 2015, the now 61-year-old took over the reins as head coach of the Japanese women's Under-17 national team, a position he held for three years. Under his charge, the team finished runners-up at the 2015 AFC U-16 Women's Championship and qualified for the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup 2016. After a spell with Nippon Sport Science University Fields Yokohama in 2019, Kusunose joined Urawa Red Diamonds Ladies' youth side in 2020 before taking the top job a year later.



 **SABAH FA (MAS)**

Jsy No.	Popular Name	Date of Birth	Position
1	NUR AFIZA AZLEE	21-10-2000	Goalkeeper
2	SAKI UENO	20-11-1994	Defender
6	ROCILLYEKA LOLE	17-04-2008	Midfielder
7	JACIAH JUMILIS	23-07-1991	Midfielder
8	ESLILAH ESAR	18-07-1989	Defender
10	HAINDEE MASROH	17-04-1993	Midfielder
11	ROSDIANAH ADELINE	11-08-2001	Defender
12	HENRIETTA JUSTINE	19-08-2002	Forward
13	NURHALIZAH AHMAD	03-08-2002	Midfielder
14	JULIANA BAREK	04-01-2002	Defender
15	SITI NURFAIZAH SAIDIN	01-04-2002	Midfielder
17	AINIE TULIS	04-03-1994	Midfielder
18	JESSICA SUSANNE MAILU	18-08-2000	Defender
19	NURUL NADIA	13-03-2001	Forward
20	ASMA JUNAIIDI	18-11-1992	Goalkeeper
23	SITI NURSASHA	23-12-2000	Midfielder
25	AZZLYEANIEH KINULI	03-02-2005	Forward
29	AOI KIZAKI	13-03-1998	Midfielder
30	NURUL AZURIN MAZLAN	27-01-2000	Goalkeeper
32	INTAN SARAH ANISAH	10-07-1999	Forward
33	MISAKI NAKAYAMA	22-08-2002	Midfielder
77	ERI NARITA	03-02-1998	Midfielder
88	STEFFI SARGE SINGH	25-10-1988	Defender



ABOUT THE TEAM

Sabah FA made history by winning the inaugural National Women's League in 2023 and while they finished runners-up in the 2024 edition, the Malaysian side made the AFC Women's Champions League™ 2024/25 Group Stage by defeating favourites PFC Nasaf 2-1 to emerge Group C winners in the Preliminary Stage.

They failed to progress further after a respectable Group A campaign, finishing with one draw and two defeats.

COACH

JUSTIN GANAI (MAS)

A former Sabah state player, Justin Ganai first took over as head coach of Sabah FC in 1999 before returning in 2005-06, 2011-12 and again in 2015. The now 69-year-old was also assistant coach for the national Under-19 women's team and head coach for the Under-16 national side in 2019. Ganai led Sabah's men team to the 2011 Malaysia Cup Quarter-Finals and took charge of the women's team in 2023, where he bagged his first major title as head coach when the team won the National Women's League.



KAYA FC-ILOILO (PHI)

Jsy No.	Popular Name	Date of Birth	Position
1	INNA PALACIOS	08-02-1994	Goalkeeper
3	CHRISTINE HULLEZA	30-01-2000	Defender
5	HALI LONG	21-01-1995	Defender
6	SHELAH MAE CADAG	06-08-1998	Defender/ Midfielder/ Forward
7	KATHLEEN CAMILLE MULDONG RODRIGUEZ	27-12-1994	Forward
10	JULISSA CISNEROS	23-05-2000	Forward
11	JONELA MIRAVITE	20-06-2000	Defender
12	ALEXIS TAN	20-07-2004	Goalkeeper
13	ANNA REYES	13-10-1998	Defender
14	MAYA ALCANTARA	22-07-2000	Defender
15	DIONESA TOLENTIN	25-06-2000	Forward
16	CHARISA MARIE LEMORAN	21-09-1998	Midfielder
17	JANLY FONTAMILLAS	24-01-2000	Defender
18	ROCELLE MARIA MENDANO	19-05-2000	Midfielder
19	ANICKA CASTANEDA	15-12-1999	Midfielder
21	SARA ISOBEL CASTANEDA	05-12-1996	Midfielder
22	JOYCE ONRUBIA	29-10-1999	Forward
23	SHEEN NICOLE BORRES	02-01-1998	Midfielder
26	SARAHGEN TULABING	22-09-2003	Midfielder
28	SOPHIA LYTTLE	22-02-2005	Midfielder
30	LYKA CUENCO	30-10-2003	Defender
33	YASMIN ELAURIA	17-02-2000	Goalkeeper
47	JAZINDA BORRA	29-11-2003	Midfielder



ABOUT THE TEAM

Founded in 2019, Kaya FC-Iloilo won the 2023 PFF Women's League, their first championship title since joining the league in the inaugural 2016/17 season. The PFF Women's Cup runners-up in 2024, they made their international debut at the 2022 SingaCup's Women Football Championship in Singapore, where they emerged triumphant.

Kaya FC-Iloilo finished third in Group B at the AFC Women's Champions League™ 2024/25 with two draws and one defeat, narrowly missing out on a berth in the next round.

COACH

MARNELLI SALVADOR DIMZON (PHI)

Better known as "Let", Dimzon began her on-field career with the Philippines national team in 1998 and was part of the squad at the 2003 AFC Women's Championship. The now 46-year-old began coaching with Far Eastern University in 2010 and held stints with the national Under-14, Under-16 and senior teams until 2019. Dimzon joined Kaya FC-Iloilo in 2019 while helping out the Philippines and Guam national teams as assistant coach from 2022-23. She guided Kaya FC-Iloilo to their 2023 PFF Women's League title, which saw them qualify for the AFC Women's Champions League™ 2024/25.



COLLEGE OF ASIAN SCHOLARS (THA)

Jsy No.	Popular Name	Date of Birth	Position
1	YADA SENGYONG	10-09-1993	Goalkeeper
2	U-RAIPORN YONGKUL	17-08-1998	Forward
3	PHONPHIRUN PHILAWAN	08-04-1999	Midfielder
4	KANJANAPORN SAENKHUN	18-07-1996	Defender
5	TIPKRITTA ONSAMAI	17-06-2000	Defender
6	PIKUL KHUEANPET	20-09-1988	Midfielder
7	ORAPIN WAENGOEN	07-10-1995	Midfielder
9	KANYANAT CHETTHABUTR	24-09-1999	Forward
10	SUNISA SRANGTHAISONG	06-05-1988	Defender
13	KURISARA LIMPAWANICH	05-02-2009	Forward
14	SANGRAWEE MEEKHAM	27-02-1997	Midfielder
15	TAMONWAN RAKSAPHAKDI	24-02-2000	Defender
18	PANITA PHOMRAT	27-10-1998	Goalkeeper
19	KHWANJIRA NGOK-WONG	22-12-2003	Midfielder
21	KARNJANATHAT PHOMSRI	17-01-2003	Forward
22	JIDAPA PHARA	11-04-2003	Goalkeeper
23	SUPAPRON INTARAPRASIT	18-02-2004	Defender
27	SARANYA LAMEE	30-06-2004	Midfielder
29	KRITTIYA MUNRANG	05-03-2003	Forward
31	CHATCHAWAN RODTHONG	22-06-2002	Midfielder
33	BEATRIZ DA SILVA	06-12-1989	Midfielder
37	PARICHAT THONGRONG	14-05-2006	Midfielder
72	STEFANI CABRAL	14-07-1991	Forward



ABOUT THE TEAM

Founded in 2001, the College of Asian Scholars are a dominant force in Thai women's football, winning the Thai Women's League six times since 2011, including the 2024 edition. They added to their impressive domestic record by winning the AFC Women's Club Championship™ (East Region) in 2022.

At the AFC Women's Champions League™ 2024/25, College of Asian Scholars finished last in Group B with a single point from three matches.

COACH

NUENGRUTAI SRATHONGVIAN (THA)

A former Thai international, Nuengrutai Srathongvian played for Police Club from 1992-2001 and also represented the country in field hockey, winning a SEA Games gold in 1995. Nuengrutai began her coaching journey at the Asian Graduate College in 2009 and was appointed assistant coach for the women's national team in 2013, before taking over as head coach a year later. That made the 53-year-old the first woman to hold the position, and she also went on to coach various age-group national sides before taking charge of College of Asian Scholars in 2020.





TAICHUNG BLUE WHALE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL TEAM (TPE)

Jsy No.	Popular Name	Date of Birth	Position
1	TSAI MING-JUNG	23-01-1989	Goalkeeper
2	CHANG CHI-LAN	18-09-1996	Midfielder
3	SHEN YEN-CHUN	26-11-2000	Defender
5	HUANG KE-SIN	18-07-2003	Defender
6	SILAWAN INTAMEE	22-01-1994	Midfielder
7	PAN SHIN-YU	03-05-1997	Defender
9	NIEN CHING-YUN	18-02-2002	Midfielder
12	WU YU	09-01-1998	Midfielder
13	SAOWALAK PENGNGAM	30-11-1996	Forward
14	MAHO TANAKA	04-03-2001	Forward
15	LIN YA-HSUAN	31-12-2002	Midfielder
16	CHEN JIN-WEN	13-06-2003	Midfielder
17	LIN JING-XUAN	11-05-2005	Midfielder
18	CHIANG TZU-SHAN	20-04-2003	Midfielder
19	PITSAMAI SORNSAI	19-01-1989	Defender
20	CHEN TZU-CHEN	01-12-1998	Defender
22	LI PEI-JUNG	25-04-2000	Defender
23	LIU CHIEN-YUN	08-08-1992	Midfielder
24	LIN YU-SYUAN	26-02-2003	Midfielder
25	WU FANG-YU	19-03-2005	Goalkeeper
26	WARAPORN BOONSING	16-02-1990	Goalkeeper
28	LIN CHIA-YING	24-03-2007	Forward
29	LIAO JIE-NING	24-09-2008	Forward



ABOUT THE TEAM

Taichung Blue Whale Women's Football Team secured a record fifth domestic league title in 2023, underlining their dominance. Runners-up in the East Zone at the AFC Women's Club Championship™ in 2022, they finished second in the league in 2024.

The club finished third in Group C of the AFC Women's Champions League™ 2024/25 to make the Quarter-Finals as the second-best third-placed side, before going down 3-0 to Australia's Melbourne City FC.

COACH

LU KUEI-HUA (TPE)

Lu Kuei-Hua became the first women head coach of the Chinese Taipei women's senior team in 2003, having first come on board as assistant coach in 1999. She was also Chinese Taipei's assistant coach of the senior side at the AFC Women's Asian Cup™ in 2008 as well as the Under-19 and Under-16 women's teams in 2009 and 2011 respectively. Her work to rebuild women's grassroots football in Taichung also saw Lu receive a Special Merit prize in the Best Grassroots Leader category at the AFC Special Grassroots and Elite Women's Youth Football Awards 2019.

Having served as assistant coach at Taichung Blue Whale Women's Football Team, Lu took over the outgoing Hiroyuki Horino prior to the 2018 season and successfully retained the domestic crown. The 60-year-old was named Coach of the Year for the feat, which she repeated in 2019, 2021 and 2023 – winning the title in each of those campaigns.



ABU DHABI COUNTRY CLUB (UAE)

Jsy No.	Popular Name	Date of Birth	Position
1	ROUDA KHADEM ALMHEIRI	01-07-1992	Goalkeeper
2	FATIMA JASSEM ALHOSANI	23-04-2002	Defender
3	LARA IVANUSA	09-01-1997	Forward
4	FATEMA GHULAM ALMARZOOQI	25-10-2004	Defender
5	NANAMI SONE	02-09-1999	Defender
6	SHAMMA KHAMIS ALMANSOORI	17-11-1992	Defender
7	AHOUD ALZARKAN	20-04-2008	Midfielder
8	NOUF FALEH AL ANZI	14-11-1996	Midfielder
9	RAWAN ABDULLA ALHAMMADI	12-11-2002	Midfielder
11	TOORFAH ALGHAFRI	20-11-2001	Forward
12	LIDIJA KULIS	02-05-1992	Defender
13	REKHA POUDEL	22-01-2000	Forward
17	MAHA MUSA ALBLOOSHI	17-05-2004	Goalkeeper
18	EUGENIA TETTEH	28-08-2002	Midfielder
19	AICHA HAMIDECHE	02-10-2001	Midfielder
20	GHANIMA RASHID ALZAABI	22-10-2003	Defender
22	LYDIA KRAMPAH	04-05-2003	Defender
23	AGYEMANG ASIRIFI SERVI	28-01-2000	Midfielder
26	SALHA RASHID ALZAABI	26-05-2001	Defender
27	RASHIDA IBRAHIM	14-05-2001	Midfielder
30	NAEEMA IBRAHIM GHARIB JUMA	30-12-1999	Defender
35	JEANE DA CRUZ	24-03-1999	Goalkeeper



ABOUT THE TEAM

Formed in 2004, Abu Dhabi Country Club was the founder of women's football in the United Arab Emirates, representing the country in several international competitions. One of the pioneer teams of the UAE Women's League, they have won every league title since the competition's inception in 2012, including the 2023/24 edition.

Abu Dhabi CC finished second in Group A at the AFC Women's Champions League™ 2024/25 with one win and two draws, before bowing out in the Quarter-Finals after losing 5-4 to Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh City Women's FC.

COACH

SARA HASSANIEN (EGY)

Born in Cairo, Sara Hassanien was a talented attacking midfielder who represented Egypt at the international level, notably starring at the 1998 African Women's Championship at the age of 15. After winning a host of trophies in Egypt, she signed for Abu Dhabi CC and continued to enjoy success as their captain, while also going on to turn out for the UAE women's national team.

Hassanien's coaching journey began in 2006 at Abu Dhabi CC's academy and she went on to become the UAE's assistant coach at the AFC U-16 Women's Championship 2015 Qualifiers. A four-year part-time coaching stint at Al Ain SC was followed by a return to Abu Dhabi CC as assistant in mid 2019, before rising up to the head coach position in January 2020.





KEY PLAYERS

KEY PLAYERS KEY PLAYERS KEY PLAYERS

GOALKEEPERS



NO.22
CHEN CHEN
WUHAN JIANGDA WFC



NO.24
MALENA GARCIA
MELBOURNE CITY FC



NO. 12
RAHA YAZDANI
BAM KHATOON FC



NO. 1
SAKIKO IKEDA
URAWA RED DIAMONDS LADIES

DEFENDERS



NO. 90
KIM HYE-RI
WUHAN JIANGDA WFC



NO. 5
WU HAIYAN
WUHAN JIANGDA WFC



NO. 13
REBEKAH STOTT
MELBOURNE CITY FC



NO. 5
TAYLOR OTTO
MELBOURNE CITY FC



NO. 5
KO YOO-JIN
HYUNDAI STEEL RED ANGELS



NO. 2
YU ENDO
URAWA RED DIAMONDS LADIES



NO. 19
CHUONG THI KIEU
HO CHI MINH CITY

KEY PLAYERS KEY PLAYERS KEY PLAYERS

MIDFIELDERS



NO. 7
WANG SHUANG
WUHAN JIANGDA WFC



NO. 9
SARATOU TRAORÉ
WUHAN JIANGDA WFC



NO. 12
SHELBY MCMAHON
MELBOURNE CITY FC



NO. 18
LEAH DAVIDSON
MELBOURNE CITY FC



NO. 7
KIM MYEONG-JIN
HYUNDAI STEEL RED ANGELS



NO. 5
MIKI ITO
URAWA RED DIAMONDS LADIES



NO. 19
YUZUHO SHIOYOSHI
URAWA RED DIAMONDS LADIES

FORWARDS



NO.33
TEREZA ENGESHA OBUNYU
WUHAN JIANGDA WFC



NO.9
HOLLY MCNAMARA
MELBOURNE CITY FC



NO. 11
KIM SO-EUN
HYUNDAI STEEL RED ANGELS



NO. 7
HANA TAKAHASHI
URAWA RED DIAMONDS LADIES



AWARDS



MVP: REBEKAH STOTT, MELBOURNE CITY FC (AUS)



TOP GOALSCORER: YUZUKO SHIOHOSHI
(4 GOALS), URAWA RED DIAMONDS LADIES (JPN)

FAIR PLAY AWARD: MELBOURNE CITY FC (AUS)





DATA

DATA

PASSING ACCURACY%

1	Melbourne City FC	87%
2	Hyundai Steel Red Angels WFC	85%
3	Urawa Red Diamonds Ladies	72%
4	Wu Han Jiangda WFC	70%
5	Ho Chi Minh City WFC	69%
6	Taichung Blue Whale WFT	57%
7	Abu Dhabi Country Club	54%
8	Bam Khatoon FC	51%

AVERAGE CROSSES PER GAME

1	Hyundai Steel Red Angels WFC	27
2	Urawa Red Diamonds Ladies	27
3	Ho Chi Minh City WFC	19
4	Wu Han Jiangda WFC	16
5	Melbourne City FC	12
6	Taichung Blue Whale WFT	7
7	Bam Khatoon FC	6
8	Abu Dhabi Country Club	4

AVERAGE EXPECTED GOALS PER GAME

1	Urawa Red Diamonds Ladies	3.6
2	Hyundai Steel Red Angels WFC	2.2
3	Melbourne City FC	1.9
4	Ho Chi Minh City WFC	1.7
5	Wu Han Jiangda WFC	1.6
6	Bam Khatoon FC	1.2
7	Abu Dhabi Country Club	1.1
8	Taichung Blue Whale WFT	0.8

POSSESSION%

1	Melbourne City FC	71%
2	Hyundai Steel Red Angels WFC	70%
3	Urawa Red Diamonds Ladies	70%
4	Ho Chi Minh City WFC	52%
5	Wu Han Jiangda WFC	48%
6	Taichung Blue Whale WFT	39%
7	Abu Dhabi Country Club	32%
8	Bam Khatoon FC	31%

PASSING ACCURACY IN FINAL THIRD%

1	Hyundai Steel Red Angels WFC	74%
2	Melbourne City FC	73%
3	Urawa Red Diamonds Ladies	64%
4	Wu Han Jiangda WFC	55%
5	Ho Chi Minh City WFC	55%
6	Bam Khatoon FC	42%
7	Taichung Blue Whale WFT	41%
8	Abu Dhabi Country Club	40%

TOP SCORER (CLUB)

1	Urawa Red Diamonds Ladies	21
2	Melbourne City FC	14
3	Wu Han Jiangda WFC	11
4	Ho Chi Minh City WFC	11
5	Abu Dhabi Country Club	10
6	Hyundai Steel Red Angels WFC	8
7	Taichung Blue Whale WFT	5
8	Bam Khatoon FC	4

AVERAGE SHOTS PER GAME

1	Urawa Red Diamonds Ladies	27
2	Hyundai Steel Red Angels WFC	19
3	Ho Chi Minh City WFC	16
4	Melbourne City FC	15
5	Wu Han Jiangda WFC	15
6	Taichung Blue Whale WFT	12
7	Bam Khatoon FC	12
8	Abu Dhabi Country Club	9

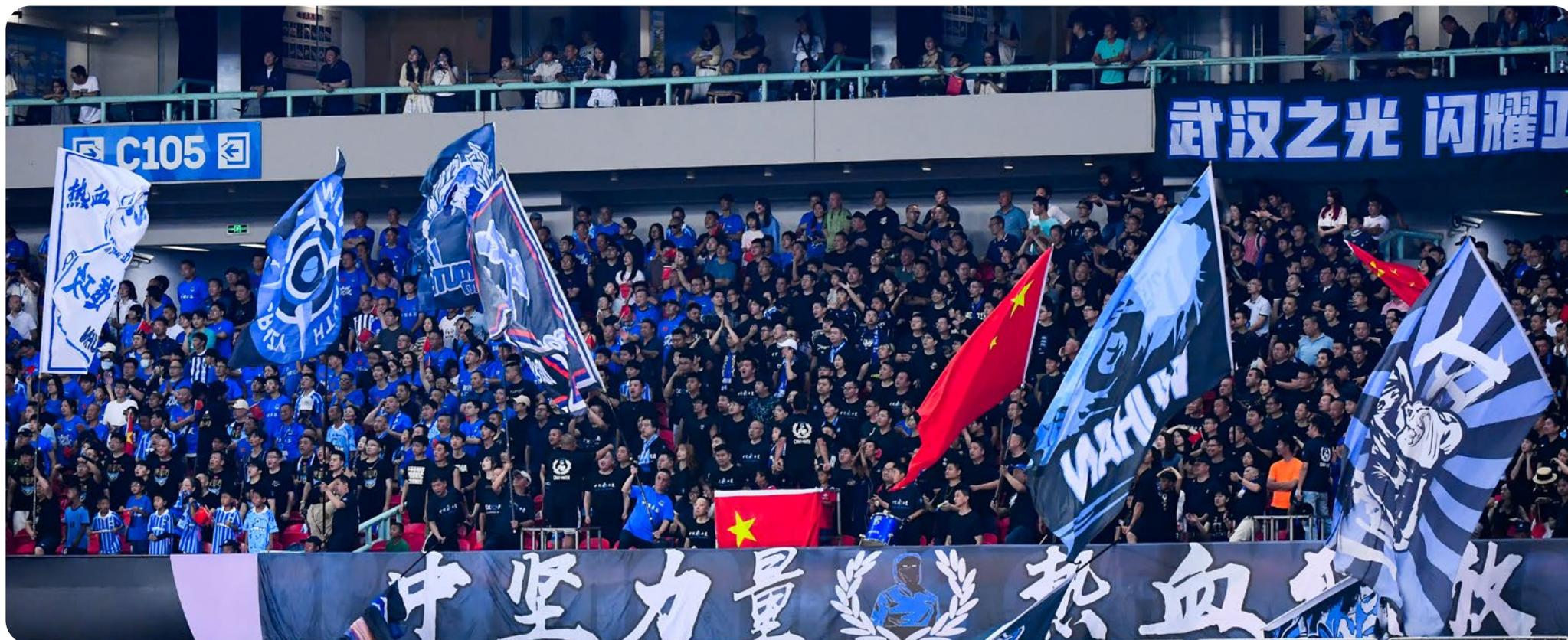
AVERAGE SHOTS ON TARGET PER GAME

1	Urawa Red Diamonds Ladies	10
2	Hyundai Steel Red Angels WFC	8
3	Melbourne City FC	6
4	Ho Chi Minh City WFC	6
5	Wu Han Jiangda WFC	5
6	Taichung Blue Whale WFT	5
7	Bam Khatoon FC	5
8	Abu Dhabi Country Club	5

DATA

AFC WOMEN'S CHAMPIONS LEAGUE 2024/25

CHANNEL	X	FACEBOOK	"INSTAGRAM (EN)"	"INSTAGRAM (IR)"	TIK TOK	THREADS	YOUTUBE	WEIBO	DOUYIN	TOTAL
IMPRESSIONS	1,070,000	3,420,000	3,700,000	21,700,000	10,500	24,300	15,672,505	2,597,000	5,102,869	53,297,174
ENGAGEMENTS	10,800	126,900	110,600	880,900	323	535	22,844	4,779	154,596	1,312,277
VIDEO VIEWS	330,111	1,112,542	484,518	11,526,671	10,452	8,566	1,006,564	1,065,000	5,102,869	20,647,293





REFEREES



AFC
WOMEN'S
CHAMPIONS
LEAGUE™

FINALS 2025

PRESENTED BY NEOM

1. SUMMARY

A total of 31 referees, 35 assistant referees, and four Video Match Officials (VMOs) were appointed to officiate the AFC Women's Champions League™ 2024/25.

REFEREES

NO.	NAME	MA
1	Rebecca Anne Durcau	AUS
2	Casey Lisa Reibelt	AUS
3	Mu Mingxin	CHN
4	Tian Jin	CHN
5	Yu Hong	CHN
6	Dong Fangyu	CHN
7	Plong Pich Akara	CAM
8	Mahsa Ghorbani	IRN
9	Ranjita Devi Tekcham	IND
10	Esra'a Mahmoud Mohammad	JOR
11	Azusa Sugino	JPN
12	Yoshimi Yamashita	JPN
13	Asaka Koizumi	JPN
14	Cha Min-ji	KOR
15	Park Se-jin	KOR
16	Kim Yu-jeong	KOR
17	Oh Hyeon-jeong	KOR
18	Veronika Bernatskaia	KGZ
19	Doumouh Ibrahim Albakkar	LBN

NO.	NAME	MA
20	Khin Nyein Chan	MYA
21	Nurul Ain Izatty Zainal	MAS
22	Alesarl Baddour	SYR
23	Nodira Mirzoeva	TJK
24	Supiree Testhomya	THA
25	Pansa Chaisanit	THA
26	Yang Shu-Ting	TPE
27	Khuloud Khudoum Bakhit Juma	UAE
28	Edita Mirabidova	UZB
29	Tran Thi Thanh	VIE
30	Bui Thi Thu Trang	VIE
31	Le Thi Ly	VIE

ASSISTANT REFEREES

NO.	NAME	MA
1	Emma Kocbek	AUS
2	Madelaine Allum	AUS
3	Joanna Kate Charaktis	AUS
4	Salma Akter Mone	BAN
5	Tshering Choden	BHU
6	Wen Lili	CHN
7	Wu Qiaoli	CHN
8	Xie Lijun	CHN
9	Bao Mengxiao	CHN

NO.	NAME	MA
10	Bahareh Seifinahavandi	IRN
11	Riiohlang Dhar	IND
12	Sabreen Awwad Abed Ala'badi	JOR
13	Saki Nakamoto	JPN
14	Chihiro Ikki	JPN
15	Makoto Bozono	JPN
16	Kim Kyoung-min	KOR
17	Lee Soo-bin	KOR
18	Yoon Eun-hee	KOR
19	Park Mi-suk	KOR
20	Ramina Tsoi	KGZ
21	Phutsavan Chanthavong	LAO
22	Nur Akmal Binti Anuar	MAS
23	Munirah Ha Ali	MAS
24	Battsetseg Unurjargal	MNG
25	May Thet Phyu	MYA
26	Merlo Silva Albano	PHI
27	Heba Saadie	PLE
28	Malika Hathlahawatta Muhandiramalage	SRI
29	Dilshoda Rahmanova	TJK
30	Supawan Hinthong	THA
31	Nuannid Donjangreed	THA
32	Amal Jamal Nasser Mubarak	UAE
33	Zilola Rahmatova	UZB

NO.	NAME	MA
34	Kristina Sereda	UZB
35	Ha Thi Phuong	VIE

VIDEO MATCH OFFICIALS

NO	VIDEO MATCH OFFICIALS	MA
1	Katherine Margaret Jacewicz	AUS
2	Abdullah Dhafer A Alshehri (Mr.)	KSA
3	Sivakorn Pu-Udom (Mr.)	THA
4	Edita Mirabidova	UZB

2. VIDEO ASSISTANT REFEREE (VAR)

The VAR system was implemented in a total of three matches from the Semi-Finals onwards. According to the stringent criteria and specifications overseen by FIFA, all Match Officials selected to officiate as VMOs obtained licenses to use the technology.

3. TECHNICAL SUMMARY

3.1 GENERAL PERFORMANCE

In a total of 40 matches, based on their assessments, referee assessors and instructors rated the overall performance of match officials as 'good'.

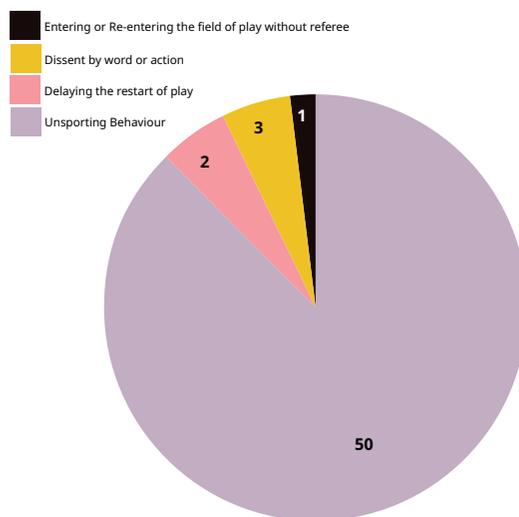
Throughout the season, the referee assessors and instructors played a crucial role in monitoring and evaluating the performance of match officials throughout the season. Their close observation and detailed match reports provided valuable feedback to the officials, helping them improve their performance over time.



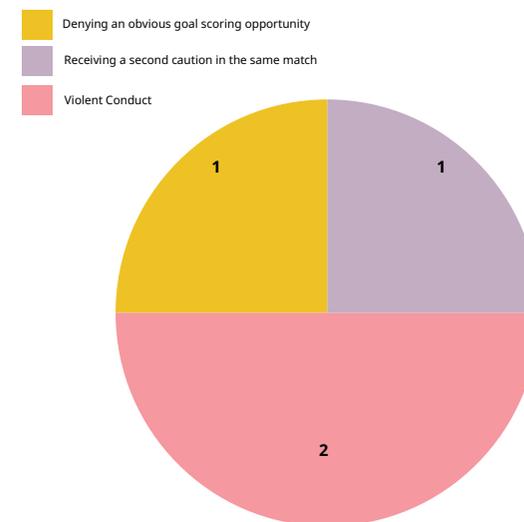
3.2 GENERAL MANAGEMENT

A total of 60 disciplinary sanctions were issued at the AFC Women's Champions League™ 2024/25 from the Preliminary Stage, of which 56 were cautions (yellow cards). One sending off took place after a second caution and three direct red cards were shown. There was an average of 1.40 yellow cards and 0.10 red cards per match.

NO. OF YELLOW CARDS WITH REASON: TOTAL 56



NO. OF RED CARDS WITH REASON: TOTAL 4



REFEREES

1. SUMMARY

- A total of 20 match officials were appointed to officiate the AFC Women's Champions League™ Finals 2025 in Wuhan, China PR.
- The breakdown of officials is as follows:
 - Four Referees
 - Eight Assistant referees
 - Four Video match officials
 - Three Technical Instructors
 - One Fitness Instructor
- This team of match officials was responsible for ensuring fair play, enforcing the rules of the game, and contributing to the success and integrity of the competition.

1.1 AFC MATCH OFFICIALS

The final match between Melbourne City FC (AUS) and Wuhan Jiangda Women's FC (CHN) on May 24, 2025, was managed by the following match officials:

NO	TECHNICAL INSTRUCTORS	MA
1	Cui Yongmei	CHN
2	Ali Ahmed I Altraifi (Mr.)	KSA
3	Thein Thein Aye	MYA

NO	FITNESS INSTRUCTOR	MA
1	Nasim Pilehvar Mohammad Abadi	IRN

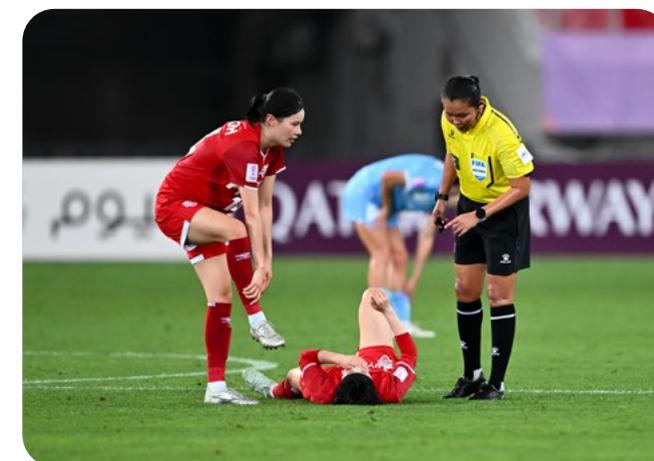
NO	REFEREES	MA
1	Asaka Koizumi	JPN
2	Veronika Bernatskaia	KGZ
3	Doumouh Ibrahim Albakkar	LBN
4	Pansa Chaisanit	THA

NO	ASSISTANT REFEREES	MA
1	Riiohlang Dhar	IND
2	Makoto Bozono	JPN
3	Chihiro Ikki	JPN
4	Ramina Tsoi	KGZ
5	Heba Saadieh	PLE
6	Supawan Hinthong	THA
7	Nuannid Donjangreed	THA
8	Amal Jamal Nasser Mubarak Badhafari	UAE

NO	VIDEO MATCH OFFICIALS	MA
1	Katherine Margaret Jacewicz	AUS
2	Abdullah Dhafer A Alshehri (Mr.)	KSA
3	Sivakorn Pu-Udom (Mr.)	THA
4	Edita Mirabidova	UZB

1.2 SUPPORT TEAM

- Referees' Liaison Officers (LOs):
The LOs played a key role in supporting the overall execution of the programme by coordinating all logistical requirements related to the referees.
 - These LOs were instrumental in facilitating effective communication with the local host, ensuring the smooth operation of daily activities, and addressing any logistical challenges that arose during the event.
- Masseurs/physiotherapists: Two physiotherapists were available to assist match officials with recovery and injury prevention strategies.
 - Their presence ensured that officials received proper care to maintain their physical condition throughout the competition.
- Medical team: an ambulance accompanied by medical staff was stationed daily at the training venue.
 - This arrangement facilitated emergency response and provided first aid treatment of medical issues or injuries during training sessions or practice matches.



2. PREPARATORY COURSE

- The referees and assistant referees underwent a comprehensive two-day preparatory course from May 19 to 20, 2025.
- The course comprised both theoretical and practical sessions, aimed at enhancing their readiness and capabilities for officiating matches effectively.

2.1 PRACTICAL SESSIONS

- During the preparatory course for match officials, daily practical sessions were held at the Wuhan FA pitch, with assistance from local team players.
- These sessions covered:
 - Positioning and movement: practicing optimal positioning on the field for clear visibility and decision-making
 - Concentration: enhancing officials' ability to maintain focus throughout the matches
 - Teamwork: promoting effective communication and collaboration among officials
 - Fitness activities: these included drills to improve endurance and agility
- These sessions aimed to provide hands-on training and prepare officials, both physically and mentally, to officiate matches effectively.

2.2 THEORETICAL SESSIONS

- During the preparatory course for match officials, various theoretical sessions were conducted with the aim of enhancing their technical knowledge and ensuring consistency in the application of the Laws of the Game.
- The sessions included:
 - Review of match incident videos: these facilitated analysis and consensus-building among match officials, which enhanced their understanding and

- application of rules in different game scenarios.
- Sharing important information and feedback: at the conclusion of the course, match officials received important feedback and information regarding both fitness and technical aspects to help them officiate matches.

- The theoretical sessions covered the following areas:
 - Technical:
 - Teamwork and match management
 - Handball
 - Offside (Interventions)
 - Positioning and reading of the game
 - Tactical fouls
 - Penalty area incidents
 - Challenges
 - Fitness:
 - Weight control
 - Recovery exercises
- By addressing these technical and fitness topics comprehensively, the preparatory course equipped match officials with the necessary knowledge and skills while ensuring their physical wellbeing throughout the tournament.



- Administration:
 - Competition Overview & Match Procedures
 - Management of communication system & flags

3. DURING THE COMPETITION

2.1 PRACTICAL SESSIONS

- The daily practical training sessions during the competition focused on two key areas, namely fitness conditioning and maintenance, as well as post-match recovery.
- Fitness conditioning and maintenance: These sessions were designed to ensure that match officials remained in peak physical condition to effectively perform their duties. The programme included cardiovascular exercises, strength training, agility drills, and flexibility routines tailored to the specific physical demands of refereeing. Emphasis was placed on developing endurance, speed, and resilience to sustain high performance across multiple matches.
- Post-match recovery: following each match, match officials participated in gymnasium and pool recovery sessions. These sessions were integral to the officials' post-match routine and aimed at facilitating physical and mental recovery after exertion on the field. Gymnasium sessions involved light exercises, stretching, and foam rolling to alleviate muscle tension and promote recovery. Pool sessions included activities such as swimming and hydrotherapy to soothe muscles and enhance relaxation.
- Incorporating both fitness conditioning and post-match recovery sessions into the officials' daily schedule demonstrated a commitment to supporting the wellbeing and performance of match officials. This holistic approach to training and recovery likely contributed to the officials' ability to maintain high standards of officiating throughout the competition while minimising the risk of fatigue or injury.

3.2 MATCH ASSESSMENT

- The utilisation of video referee assessors and on-site referee assessors played a pivotal role in ensuring the quality and consistency of officiating throughout the competition.
- Video referee assessor: Situated in the Remote Monitoring Room at the referees' hotel, the video referee assessor had the crucial task of analysing all matches in real-time. They closely tracked match situations using video feeds and compiled relevant details for subsequent debriefing sessions. This approach allowed for a comprehensive oversight of all matches and facilitated the identification of key incidents or officiating decisions.
- Referee assessors: In addition to video referee assessors, referee assessors were deployed to match venues to observe the officials' performance. These assessors closely monitored match officials throughout each game, providing immediate feedback and assessment of their decisions and actions. Their presence ensured that officials received timely guidance and support to maintain consistent and high-quality officiating standards.
- Combining the expertise of video referee assessors with the direct observations of referee assessors created a robust system for evaluating and supporting match officials. This comprehensive approach contributed to the overall improvement of refereeing standards over the course of the competition.

3.3 MATCH DEBRIEFING SESSIONS

- The match debriefings conducted for the appointed match officials served as a vital learning tool, focusing on significant incidents from the previous day's matches. These incidents were carefully analysed to glean insights and lessons that would help prepare officials for upcoming matches.
- During these debriefings, instructors emphasised areas for improvement, offering valuable advice aimed at

ensuring consistency and uniformity in recognising fouls and interpreting the Laws of the Game.

- By addressing specific incidents and providing guidance on officiating standards, the debriefing sessions aimed to enhance the officials' understanding and application of the rules, ultimately contributing to fair and effective officiating in future matches.

3.4 MATCH PREPARATION SESSIONS

- Mr. Takeshi Ono, AFC Deputy Technical Director, and participants of the AFC-JFA Pro Diploma Course for Asian Elite Women Coaches, played a crucial role in providing valuable information to the appointed match officials.
- They presented insights related to team tactics and individual players' style and behaviour, which proved to be beneficial for the officials' preparation and understanding of football dynamics.
- This exchange of information likely contributed to improved officiating and better management of matches.



4. VAR SYSTEM

The VAR system was implemented for all three matches.

4.1 TECHNICAL SETUP

- A decentralised system was implemented for the competition, meaning that there was a Video Operations Room (VOR) located at the venue from where the VMOs operated. The VOR was situated in a room within the stadium, near the broadcast compound to allow camera feeds to be easily provided to the VAR System.
 - Technology Provider
 - Hawk-Eye Innovations Ltd (Video & Audio)
 - Video Operation Room
 - Located at stadium
 - Reception of all camera feeds from the Host Broadcaster (HB)
 - Referee Review Area (RRA)
 - Pyramid Monitor
 - Located next to or behind the fourth official's bench at each venue
 - Displays VAR output screen for Referees to review incidents in the case of an On-field Review (OFR)



4.2 VAR IMPLEMENTATION STATISTICS

VAR REVIEWS	TOTAL	DECISIONS CHANGED	DECISION CONFIRMED
TOTAL REVIEWS	2	2	0
On Field Reviews	2	2	0
Only VAR Reviews	0	0	0
Penalty area incident reviewed	1	1	0
Goals Reviewed	1	1	0
Average reviews per match	0.66		
1 Review every # matches	1.50		

5. TECHNICAL SUMMARY

5.1 GENERAL PERFORMANCE

- The referee assessors and instructors played a crucial role in monitoring and evaluating the performance of match officials throughout the competition. Their close observation and detailed match reports provided valuable feedback to the officials, helping them improve their performance over time.
- Based on their assessments, referee assessors and instructors rated the overall performance of match officials as 'good'. This indicates that officials demonstrated a high level of competency and professionalism in their officiating duties.

- Furthermore, it was noted that refereeing standards improved as the competition progressed. This suggests that officials were receptive to feedback and actively worked on addressing any areas of weakness, resulting in an overall enhancement of refereeing quality as the tournament advanced.
- Overall, the efforts of referee assessors and instructors, coupled with the dedication of match officials, contributed to the maintenance and eventual improvement of refereeing standards throughout the competition.



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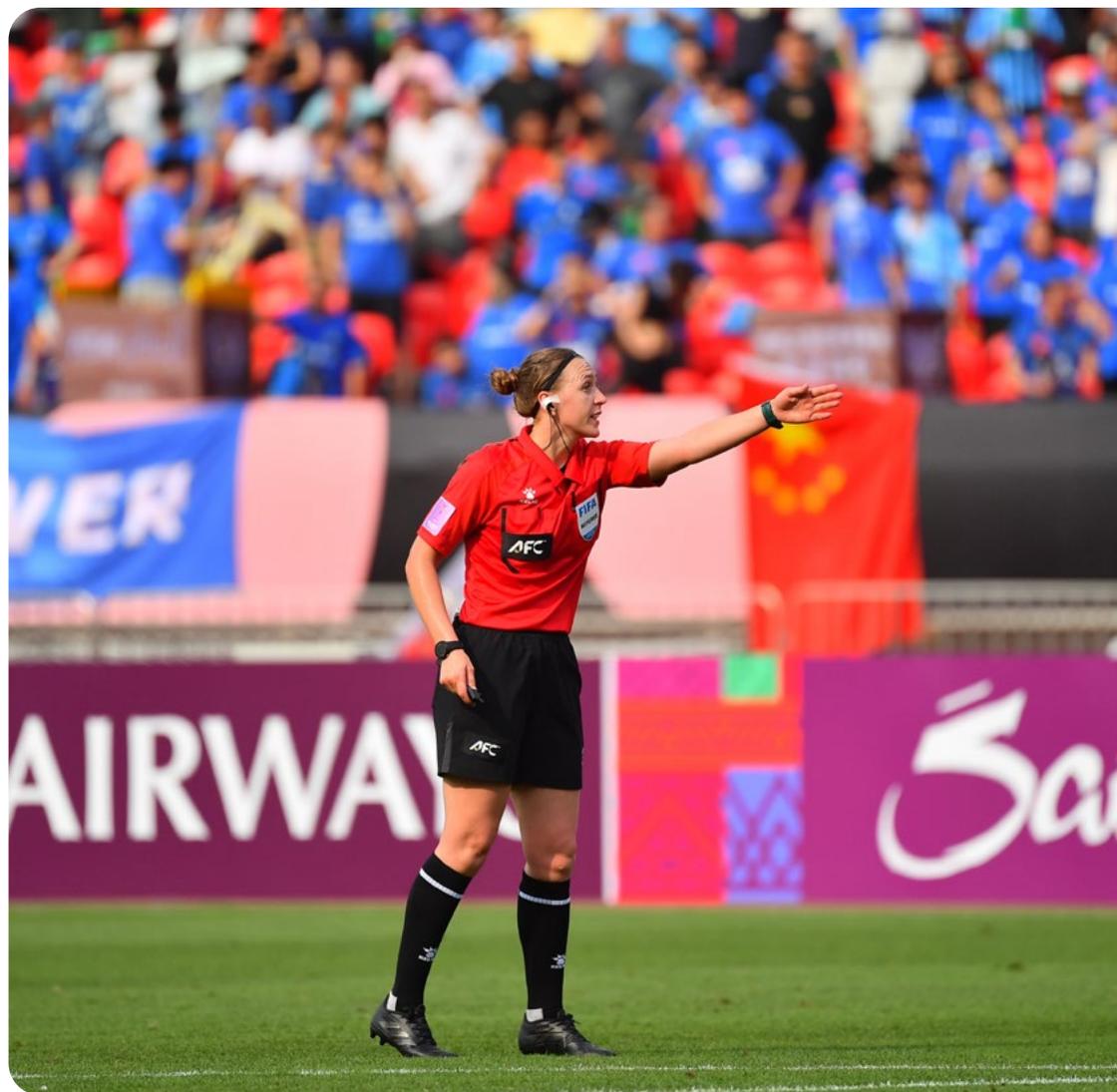
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