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ASIAN CUP
UAE 2019™**

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EMIRATES ECONOMY

Emirates



Dear friends,

On behalf of the Asian Football Confederation, it is my privilege to welcome you to the greatest ever AFC Asian Cup being held here in the United Arab Emirates.

We also extend our thanks to the leadership of His Highness Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE, His Highness Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, and His Highness Mohammad bin Zayed al Khalifa, the Crown Prince of the UAE.

I must thank His Excellency Marwan Ahmed Ghalita, the President of the UAE Football Association, and the Higher Local Organising Committee vice-chairman His Excellency Mohammed Khalfan Al Romaithi as well as Tournament Director HE Aref Hamad Al Awani for their magnificent contribution to the success of this Asian Cup.

The AFC Asian Cup 2019 is bigger than ever, with a record 24 teams taking part – including at least one from each of the AFC's five regional zones.

It is the richest ever with a prize fund of US\$14.8 million with the winners taking home a remarkable US\$5m and a glittering new trophy.

And the AFC has shown its faith in Asian excellence by the appointment of Molten of Japan to manufacture the special tournament match balls.

This tournament, the first in the UAE since 1996, will be played in four great cities and at eight magnificent stadiums which will showcase the UAE's skill and ability to deliver world class events.

During the tournament we will witness the Continent's greatest players and teams at the very peak of their performance deliver moments that will live long in the memory of those here in the stadiums and the millions upon millions watching on television or engaged through social media.

I wish all the players and teams the very best of luck as they strive to reach the final in Abu Dhabi on February 1 and I thank also the referees and their assistants for their continued excellence and important contribution to the tournament.

As the slogan says, we are 'Bringing Asia Together' here in the UAE, and I am sure everyone will enjoy the experience.

Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa
AFC President

THE TIME IS NOW

THE AFC ASIAN CUP UAE 2019 IS FINALLY UPON US AND FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE COMPETITION'S HISTORY 24 TEAMS WILL COMPETE FOR THE RIGHT TO BE CROWNED CONTINENTAL CHAMPIONS. NO FEWER THAN SIX FORMER WINNERS, AS WELL AS THREE DEBUTANTS, WILL TAKE TO THE FIELD WHEN ASIA'S MOST PRESTIGIOUS TOURNAMENT KICKS OFF IN JANUARY.



James Troisi ensured his name would go down in Australian footballing history when the midfielder struck an extra-time winner to give the Socceroos a 2-1 victory over Korea Republic and seal the hosts' maiden AFC Asian Cup title, on home soil, in early 2015. More than 76,000 spectators turned up at Stadium Australia in the hope that Ange Postecoglou's side could banish the memories of defeat to Japan in the 2011 final in Qatar. The competition's Most Valuable Player Massimo Luongo opened the scoring just before half-time, only for Son

Heung-min to level late on and force an additional 30 minutes as the East Asians maintained hopes of a first title since 1960. But the home side responded well and got their reward in the 105th minute when Troisi finished from close in after goalkeeper Kim Jin-hyeon could only parry out Tomi Juric's cross. The goal proved decisive and, after suffering a heartbreaking loss in extra-time following Tadanari Lee's winner four years earlier, Socceroos players and fans rejoiced as Australia were crowned kings of the continent. For Korea Republic, their decades-



long wait to end their trophy drought continued, but it was they who dominated the early editions of the tournament, after the Asian Football Confederation was founded in Manila in 1954. Played in a round-robin format, the Taeguk Warriors won the inaugural AFC Asian Cup in Hong Kong in 1956 and then retained their title in 1960 on home soil.

Four years later, a new name was engraved on the trophy when Israel tasted glory, before the rise of a continental powerhouse began in 1968 as the Islamic Republic of Iran won the last of the round-robin tournaments in front of home support in Tehran. Korea Republic sensed a third title in 1972 but were denied as Iran sealed back-to-back successes following a 2-1 victory in Thailand, and the Iranians then became the first and to date only nation to claim three in a row when a 1-0 win over Kuwait secured the 1976 title on home soil. The AFC Asian Cup entered its fourth decade in 1980 and a fourth country added its name to the roll of honour as Kuwait made up for defeat in Tehran by dealing Korea Republic a second successive final defeat after running out 3-0 victors in Kuwait City.



A new winner was guaranteed ahead of the 1984 final when Saudi Arabia met China in Singapore, and it was the Saudis who were victorious after a 2-0 win that launched their own period of relative dominance. Another final, another defeat for Korea Republic in 1988 as a scoreless draw against the defending champions was followed by an agonising 4-3 penalty shootout loss.

East Asia finally got its hands back on the trophy in 1992 but it was Japan rather than Korea Republic who hoisted the trophy above their heads as a 1-0 win in the final in Hiroshima denied Saudi Arabia a third successive title and saw the Samurai Blue join the continent's elite.

The United Arab Emirates were awarded the chance to host their first AFC Asian Cup in 1996 and the Emiratis advanced all the way to the final, where they met two-time champions Saudi Arabia. With defeat four years earlier fresh in their minds, the Green Falcons held their nerve from the spot to win on penalties after a scoreless draw. Japan began the new millennium by claiming their second title, after again seeing off Saudi Arabia 1-0 in the final in Beirut, before the Samurai Blue became the third team to win the competition three times when they beat hosts China 3-1 in the 2004 final.

The AFC Asian Cup grabbed global headlines in 2007 as war-torn Iraq stunned the world after Younis Mahmoud headed home the only goal of the game against Saudi Arabia in Jakarta. The win capped a remarkable campaign for the Iraqis in a tournament that had been held in the Southeast Asian nations of Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam.

Having debuted and progressed to the quarter-finals in 2007, Australia reached the final in their second appearance in 2011, but were sunk by one of the most memorable goals in the tournament's history as Lee's



人生
楽しい
人の
勝ち



sweetly struck volley in extra-time sealed an unprecedented fourth title for Japan.

It was third time lucky for the Australians, though, when Troisi's winner in 2015 went some way towards erasing the memories from Doha as the Socceroos became the eighth champions of a competition that is the pinnacle of Asian football. Almost four years on from that glorious night in Sydney, 24 nations will descend upon the UAE as the cities of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Al Ain and Sharjah get set to stage the biggest AFC Asian Cup yet.

The holders will be looking to retain their trophy, while the Emiratis will aim to go one better than when they lost the 1996 final on home soil.

Already boasting a record four titles, Japan will target their fifth after being the best performing Asian nation at the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia, while Iran, Korea Republic and Saudi Arabia will be desperate to end their long waits for the trophy.

Iraq are the sixth former winner to appear in the UAE and, after a positive two years, can enter the competition with hope, while a trio of debutants in Kyrgyz Republic, the Philippines and Yemen will look to showcase their talents to the continent.

Runners-up in 1984 and 2004, China will make another bid for glory and their neighbours DPR Korea return

for a fifth time. From Southeast Asia, meanwhile, Thailand and Vietnam join the Philippines and travel with young squads full of potential and capable of upsetting the odds.

Bahrain, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar and Syria all make short trips to the UAE and should acclimatise easily, while Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan join the Iranians and the Kyrgyz as Central Asia's representatives.

And finally, India is one of a number of countries hoping a sizeable expatriate population in the UAE can spur them on to greater heights as they make their first appearance since 2011.

Whatever the outcome, the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019 is sure to offer up relentless drama and excitement from the big kick-off on January 5 to the final at Zayed Sports City Stadium on February 1, when one nation will lift the new trophy into the Abu Dhabi sky.



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AFC ASIAN CUP UAE 2019 PROGRAMME

THIS IS OUR TOURNAMENT

FORMER UNITED ARAB EMIRATES NATIONAL TEAM STAR MIDFIELDER HASSAN SAEED RECALLS THE LAST TIME HIS NATION HOSTED THE AFC ASIAN CUP, IN 1996, AND LOOKS AHEAD TO WHAT WILL COME IN THE 2019 EDITION.



Abdulghani was first booked for a challenge from behind on Saeed 20 minutes before the end of regular time. Saeed's consistent pressure caused Saudi Arabia's number 13 to handle the ball in frustration and receive his marching orders in the 86th minute.

Despite their numerical advantage, the UAE failed to capitalise on Abdulghani's dismissal, as goalkeeper Mohammed Al Deayea put in a performance worthy of his 'Goalkeeper of the Tournament' tag, denying the Whites several scoring opportunities, as the game eventually went to penalties.

"We gave it everything but were ultimately unlucky with the penalties," says the former UAE international, whose three goals had helped the Whites reach their first continental final, before his miss from the spot confirmed they would have to make do with silver.

"We had played in the Gulf Cup in Oman just before it and didn't do well. So, when the AFC Asian Cup came around, we were determined to make amends.

"Back in 1996, we played top teams to prepare for the AFC Asian Cup; we faced Hristo Stoichkov's Bulgaria and Gheorghe Hagi's Romania. They were two of the best teams in world football

back then."

Saeed and his teammates certainly made amends. Having finished fourth in the previous edition, the UAE started their home campaign with a 1-1 draw against Korea Republic, before a dramatic win over Kuwait three days later.

"I had suffered an injury in the Gulf Cup, so was sat on the bench for the first match, but coach Tomislav Ivic had built his plans around me being part of his starting 11. I recovered

and was fit again for the Kuwait match."

A right winger by trade, Saeed was the only player from Ittihad Kalba to be drafted into the squad. He did not possess the strongest physique, but his athleticism was remarkable, and he was excellent at heading the ball.

The UAE were 2-0 down to

Kuwait at the half-time break, then just eight minutes after the restart, Saeed moved into space at the far post, rising above his marker to head home a cross sent from left-back Munther Ali. His goal laid the foundation for a memorable comeback. Talisman Al Talyani equalised two minutes later with another header, before Bakheet Saad sealed the victory ten minutes from time.



It can be easy to forget you are just a ninety minutes' drive away from the luxurious attractions and futuristic skyscrapers of Dubai, as the wavy road through the mountains of the United Arab Emirates' Eastern Region give way to the tranquil seaside town of Kalba.

"It is completely different," Hassan Saeed says, his eyes glistening as he gazes into the distance, his mind wandering into what could be mistaken for another life. "Twenty-three years ago, we played football for the love of it."

Two things remain unchanged for Saeed, his love for the beautiful game and for his hometown, Kalba. Never has the sound of a football cannoning off the woodwork sounded as loud as it did on the evening of December 21, 1996 as the 60,000 fans present at Abu Dhabi's Zayed Sport City were reduced to utter silence, watching their team's top goalscorer in the tournament hit the post from 12 yards. The finest of margins had just denied the UAE a historic victory in the final of the AFC Asian Cup against

neighbours Saudi Arabia. Saeed was still holding his head in his hands, the 50 yards' walk to the halfway line feeling like a thousand miles as Khalid Al Muwallad slotted home the winning penalty for the Green Falcons. The UAE could have sealed the title long before the penalty shootout; just two minutes into the second half, Saeed applied pressure on Saudi defender Abdullah Zubromawi, dispossessing him and laying a deft backheel pass for Zuhair Bakheet who

advanced into the box and put a cross on a golden plate for Adnan Al Talyani. The latter, arguably the finest footballer the country has ever produced, was left with the goal at his mercy from a few yards out, but somehow the seasoned goalscorer sent his effort wide and the scores remained level.

Saeed was facing one of the continent's best left-backs in Hussein Abdulghani, and the boy from Kalba was such a menace for his marker that



Saeed was on target again in the final group match, scoring the first in a 2-0 win over Indonesia as the Whites progressed to the quarter-finals after topping their group. A nervy affair against Iraq followed, one which went into extra-time before defender Abdulrahman Ibrahim rifled in a free-kick from 30 yards as the first 'Golden Goal' in AFC Asian Cup history won



the game for the hosts. The semi-finals brought a rematch against Kuwait, who had eliminated reigning champions Japan in the previous round. This time it was a cagey affair with little to separate the sides. The hosts needed something special to propel them into their

maiden final, and Saeed was there to deliver. Playmaker Mohammed Ali stepped up to take the corner kick for the home side in the 69th minute, and Saeed sneaked into space inside the Kuwaiti box, before connecting perfectly with the cross, his powerful header leaving goalkeeper Falah Al Majidi rooted to the spot. "It was the proudest moment of my entire career and I am forever grateful for it," Saeed recalls, the spark in his eyes getting ever brighter. "I had scored in back-to-back matches in the group stage and my fitness was getting better as the tournament progressed. My goal against Kuwait sent us into the final and made me the team's top scorer in the tournament. "Hosting the 1996 AFC Asian Cup made a huge difference to UAE football. Everyone stood behind the national team, and we rewarded them by going all the way to the final. "As players, we were fully focused on getting a result. I remember in training, Al Talyani used to always motivate us, saying: 'This is our tournament'. It was always on our minds. Everyone was behind us too – fans, media and the UAE Football



Association. Togetherness was the secret to our success". It was indeed a roaring success, despite the disappointment of the final. The 1996 tournament remains the Whites' best result at an AFC Asian Cup, and Saeed believes their performance has laid a marker for the current generation to follow. "Winning the title is the only result that counts as a success; we have finished fourth, third and second in previous tournaments, so the only



thing left is for the UAE to win the AFC Asian Cup. Yes, in football there are no guarantees, but you have to aim for the title, especially when you are playing at home." Great expectations are being placed on the shoulders of the class of 2019, the majority of whom were part of the side that impressed in Australia four years ago. They reached the semi-finals and eventually finished third in what was the UAE's best performance on foreign soil. And, despite the

pressure, Saeed remains optimistic about the Whites' prospects. "This generation brought the UAE back to the forefront after we had struggled for a few years in the early 2000s. They have what it takes. I believe the most important thing in football is to play for the nation and give 200 percent. If this group of players work hard with that in mind, they can do much better and bring joy to the nation."



THE HAPPIEST OF MEMORIES

We often forget that the players we cheer on out on the pitch are just like us. As youngsters they kicked a ball around with their friends, dreaming of becoming footballers, of one day representing their country on the biggest stage of all. And once they get there the emotions of the occasion don't pass them by, not even for the likes of Yasuhito Endo, Japan's most-capped player and the joint-record holder for tournaments participated in and titles

won at the AFC Asian Cup. "I've played over 150 times for Japan, won the Asian Cup twice, played at four Asian Cups, and three World Cups," the Gamba Osaka star says. "It's great, that's happiness. Happiness." The Kagoshima native has won everything there is to win in the Asian game, as well as scoring for the Samurai Blue as they progressed to the last 16 at the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa, and some of his happiest memories have come at the

AFC Asian Cup. "The tournament decides who is number one in Asia, so for Japan the Asian Cup is important as we are always aiming to keep hold of our position at the top," he says of the AFC's showpiece event. "It's also connected to the Confederations Cup, so the chance to go and play in that competition the year before

**ASIAN FOOTBALL
LEGEND YASUHITO
ENDO HAS TAKEN
PART IN FOUR AFC
ASIAN CUPS, WINNING
THE TITLE TWICE,
WITH MANY OF THE
JAPAN ICON'S BEST
MOMENTS IN HIS
CAREER COMING AT
THE CONTINENTAL
TOURNAMENT.**

the World Cup makes it even more important." Endo's first AFC Asian Cup triumph came at the first time of asking, in China in 2004 – although that title comes with bittersweet memories for the 38-year-old. "I was sent off in the semi-final so was suspended for the final," he recalls. "I'd played in every game until that point so that hurt. I watched the final on my own in the stands, surrounded by China fans." Despite Endo's absence from the midfield, Japan secured a 3-1 win

over the hosts thanks to the positive tactics of their manager Zico. "He loved to attack and play offensively, so I really liked him as a coach," Endo says of the Brazilian legend. "He encouraged players to think for themselves and play. We had a really good squad of players as well. [Yoshikatsu] Kawaguchi, [Yuji] Nakazawa, [Tsuneyasu] Miyamoto, Alex [Santos]. "We won the final 3-1 but that was tinged with a little regret for me. I was happy but it was also a difficult feeling. I wanted to play. And that time was pretty scary, being in the stands surrounded by China fans. I was all on my own in a tracksuit with the Japan badge on!" That was the second time Endo had been forced to bite his nails on the sidelines in China, after he was substituted in the quarter-final against Jordan, a game which went to penalties. "First up Shunsuke [Nakamura] missed, then Alex missed, but after that we came back to win. Yoshikatsu was superb. I was watching from the bench and when Shunsuke and Alex missed it felt as though that was it and we'd lost, but the comeback was incredible. That game was amazing." Defeat to Saudi Arabia in the semi-finals followed in Vietnam in 2007, but Endo was finally able to savour the full taste of victory in 2011 when Alberto

Zaccheroni led Japan to a fourth continental crown in Qatar. "Japan were strong then as well. We beat Korea Republic in the semi-final and then Australia in the final, and it's always pleasing to win titles by defeating strong opponents. It gives you real confidence to say: 'Japan are the champions'." That 1-0 win over the Socceroos also marked a watershed moment for Japanese football, serving as long-desired retribution for a loss handed out five years previously. "They beat us at the World Cup in 2006 and from that point on Japan and Australia became rivals," Endo says. "We have also come up against them in World Cup qualifying and it's always really tight as to whether we win, lose, or draw – we pretty much match each other. After that final we grew in confidence though." After a tense 90 minutes ended scoreless in Doha, a similarly fraught period of extra-time followed and it looked increasingly like a penalty shootout would be needed until Tadanari Lee delivered a wonder strike in the 109th minute to settle things in Japan's favour. Having not featured in the 2004 final Endo revealed in the grueling





manner of victory this time – until the adrenaline wore off, at least. “[Extra-time] was actually enjoyable,” he says. “But we’d also gone all the way to penalties in the semi-final against Korea Republic so I was a



little tired. After the game everyone realised how tired they were – well, except for Chunson (Tadanari Lee) and [Yuto] Nagatomo. Chunson had only come on as a sub and Nagatomo can run forever, that guy is always ok!” Endo and his teammates were unable to defend their title in Australia four

years ago, but the midfielder did mark a personal milestone by playing his 150th game for his country in the group stage win over Iraq. “I felt, ‘I’m getting old, huh!’,” he jokes of that landmark. “But I was really happy to get to 150 games. It’s not that common for players to get to 150, so I was happy about that and we won the game too. I took a photo with everyone back at the hotel after the game, so it’s a great memory.” Having been eliminated on penalties in the quarter-final by the UAE in 2015, Endo is expecting Hajime Moriyasu’s men to make a concerted challenge for glory this time around. “I hope Japan can make it all the way to the final, but it’s so hard to say. I think the other teams are also getting stronger, but the main rivals will be Korea Republic and Australia, and of course Iran. I think they are the best team in Asia right now. “Their key asset is their physical strength, but they’re also incredibly talented technically. I think Iran will



pose the toughest challenge. “Players all around Asia are improving. The likes of Qatar and Oman are getting stronger, while teams like Thailand are really starting to show their ability as well. That means nowadays it is far from easy to get through the group stage. Australia have joined the competition too, which has changed the complexion a little and means we have one more direct rival.” As for a dark horse, Endo is impressed



by one of Japan’s Group F rivals. “Uzbekistan,” he says immediately. “They’re a really good team. And how about UAE under Zaccheroni? He’s a good coach and a nice guy. It’s being held in the UAE so I’ll go for the hosts and Uzbekistan.” Competition is sure to be fierce as players from across the continent strive to achieve their dreams, but, as a man who has been there and done that on more than one occasion, Endo knows Japan won’t be lacking

in desire to further their status as the competition’s most successful side. “It goes without saying that there’s always high motivation when playing for your country, but at the Asian Cup and World Cup in particular it’s extra high,” he says. “In Asia we always want to be the champions.”



THE EXPERTS' VIEW



WITH THE AFC ASIAN CUP UAE 2019 SET TO BE THE BIGGEST EDITION OF THE CONTINENTAL COMPETITION YET, WE TALK TO SOME OF THE BIGGEST NAMES IN THE ASIAN GAME TO GET THEIR THOUGHTS AND VIEWS ON THE UPCOMING TOURNAMENT

Our panel consists of the AFC Asian Cup's all-time Top Scorer and Islamic Republic of Iran legend Ali Daei, the 2000 AFC Asian Cup Top Scorer and Korea Republic icon Lee Dong-gook, former Iraq captain and 2000 AFC Asian Cup Team of the Tournament midfielder Abbas Obeid, and Japan's 2000 AFC Asian Cup-winning coach Philippe Troussier.



WHO WILL WIN THE AFC ASIAN CUP 2019?

ALI DAEI: In my opinion, Islamic Republic of Iran and Japan have more chance of becoming champions than the other teams. Both teams have shown their football has developed a lot in recent times.

LEE DONG-GOOK: For me, if Korea Republic could win in the final, the whole country would go crazy.

ABBAS OBEID: IR Iran or Japan, but if I must pick one: Japan. I believe they are the strongest team in Asia. Philippe Troussier: I would like to see IR Iran win the AFC Asian Cup

title. They haven't won it for many years, but they deserve it after so much improvement in their football in recent times. And also, I'd like them to win for my friend Carlos Queiroz.

WHICH TWO TEAMS WILL PLAY IN THE FINAL?

LEE DONG-GOOK: The most exciting scenario for fans would be for Korea Republic to play Japan in the final, many fans would love to see this.

ALI DAEI: As I said, I think IR Iran and Japan, if they don't happen to face each other in the earlier stages, have the highest chance to play the final.

ABBAS OBEID: Japan vs IR Iran or possibly Korea Republic. These teams put in good performances at the last World Cup.

PHILIPPE TROUSSIER: For me, IR Iran against Japan. It would be a great representation of football at the highest level in Asia. It would be a fantastic final.

WHO WILL BE THE MVP?

ALI DAEI: I think if IR Iran can qualify to the final, Alireza Jahanbakhsh will be one of the key players. Saman Ghoddos also has a high chance to perform well in the AFC Asian Cup and become MVP.

LEE DONG-GOOK: I can't pick one! The MVP will certainly be a player from the champions, it won't be me though!

ABBAS OBEID: Son Heung-min of Korea Republic will be the MVP. He's ready to be the star of this AFC Asian Cup, in my opinion.

PHILIPPE TROUSSIER: I like Takumi Minamino of Japan, he has come into form at the perfect time. He could surprise people and be a contender for MVP.

WHO WILL BE THE TOP SCORER?

ALI DAEI: I think Mehdi Taremi can be the Top Scorer, if he plays in his regular position at the front of our attacking line. But we have also other good strikers in Asia that will compete to win this title.



LEE DONG-GOOK: I hope it can be a true striker, not an attacking midfielder like Son Heung-min. Hwang Ui-jo is very capable, has a decent positional sense and a good shot. Abbas Obeid: I'm going to go for Son Heung-min again.

PHILIPPE TROUSSIER: Minamino, again. If I consider Japan to be one of the finalists, logically they will have to win matches and score goals. They play offensive football and he could be the one to find the target.

WHO WILL BE THE TOURNAMENT'S DARK HORSE?

ALI DAEI: It's very hard to predict right now, but I think China could surprise other teams in the Asian Cup.

LEE DONG-GOOK: One possibility could be Uzbekistan. They have a young, talented squad – maybe a golden generation. If not this Asian Cup, maybe the next one, they could be the best. They've played together from the beginning and such a unity and understanding could be a threat to other teams.



ABBAS OBEID: Vietnam. I saw many games of their Olympic team. They are so different from how they were ten years ago. They are technically very, very good and I think they could surprise a lot of teams.

PHILIPPE TROUSSIER: Uzbekistan could be a big surprise team in the tournament, they have improved a lot. Outside of the usual favourites, they could be one to reach the final or even be champions. Also, the UAE. The fact they are the hosts means they can be a great challenger at home.

WHO WILL BE THE YOUNG STAR?

ALI DAEI: IR Iran have some good young players that have World Cup experience. Like Saeed Ezatollahi, who I think is progressing very well. I think he can play well in the AFC Asian Cup. Lee Dong-gook: Lee Seung-woo. He has very good technical ability and, if he can work on his physique, he can become a star of the national team. Abbas Obeid: Bashar Resan, if he gets the chance to play in the starting 11. He's a very good player and plays his club football at one of the best teams in Asia.

LEE DONG-GOOK: Cho Hyun-woo. He's a superstar after the World Cup. But I knew he had the ability to be a star goalkeeper before then. He can be the national team number one for a long time. His great performances at the World Cup didn't surprise me at all, and we'll see more of those at the Asian Cup.

ABBAS OBEID: Salman Al Faraj. He is a very good player, and he keeps getting better. I saw him in the qualifiers and at the World Cup and he played very well and is a very intelligent midfielder. I think he's one of the best players in Saudi Arabia.

PHILIPPE TROUSSIER: I'd like to highlight Vietnam's Nguyen Quang Hai. He is a very good and interesting young player. I'd say he deserves a chance in Europe. Left footed, very creative – he can show the world how much Vietnamese football has improved in recent times.



PHILIPPE TROUSSIER: I have picked Japan in the final against IR Iran, so I would like to consider a player from the Iranian side. I agree with Ali Daei that Ezatollahi could be the young star to watch from Team Melli.

WHICH PLAYER(S) SHOULD WE KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR?

ALI DAEI: Sardar Azmoun. He's a great player who could play for some of the big European teams in the coming years. Korea Republic's Son Heung-min is also one of the best Asian players right now.







UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Record: Runners-Up 1996; Third Place 2015;
Fourth Place 1992; Group Stage: 2011, 2007, 2004, 1988, 1984, 1980



HOW THEY QUALIFIED

The United Arab Emirates gained the right to host the AFC Asian Cup for the second time in their history, after successfully doing so in 1996 when they reached the final, only to lose against Saudi Arabia. However, the UAE still participated in the joint AFC Asian Cup-FIFA World Cup qualifiers, finishing second in their group behind Saudi Arabia.

TOP SCORER IN QUALIFYING

Ahmed Khalil finished second in the overall AFC Asian Cup qualifiers with 11 goals to his name, only three behind Saudi Arabia's Mohammed Al Sahlawi. He netted four goals against both Malaysia and Timor-Leste.

MEMORABLE ASIAN CUP MATCH

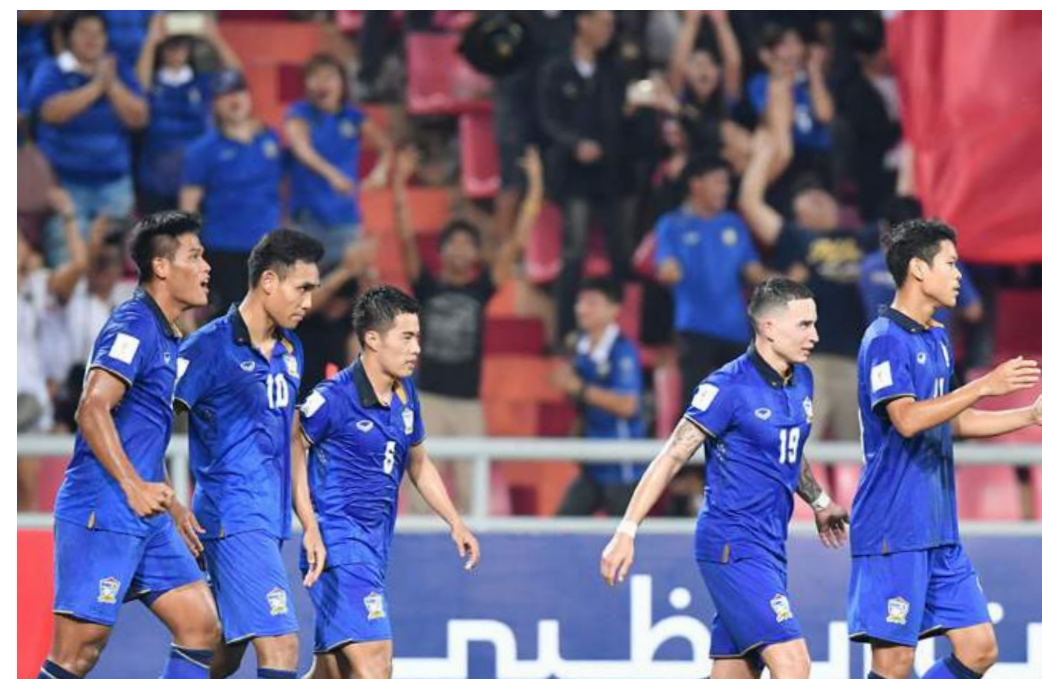
At the 2015 AFC Asian Cup quarter-finals in Australia, the UAE held reigning champions Japan to a 1-1 draw for 120 minutes before the match went to penalties. A famous Omar Abdulrahman 'Panenka' helped the Whites capitalise on two penalty misses from Japanese stars Keisuke Honda and Shinji Kagawa, winning 5-4 on penalties and advancing to the semi-finals of the competition before finishing third.

LEGEND

Long before current icon Omar Abdulrahman, goalscoring machine Adnan Al Talyani (pictured) scored 52 goals in 161 appearances for his nation. Part of the UAE side that qualified for the 1990 FIFA World Cup, Al Talyani scored in the 1984 AFC Asian Cup and netted twice during the UAE's historic 1996 campaign.

THAILAND

Record: Third Place 1972; Group Stage 2007, 2004, 2000, 1996, 1992



HOW THEY QUALIFIED

Thailand proved their growing reputation in Asia was well deserved, finishing top of Group F ahead of 2007 champions Iraq, with four wins and two draws – both of which came in a pair of thrilling 2-2 draws with the Iraqis – which saw them qualify directly for their first AFC Asian Cup since 2007.

TOP SCORER IN QUALIFYING

Thailand shared their 14 goals around, with five players scoring at least two goals, but it was leading striker Teerasil Dangda (pictured) with three goals who was the War Elephants' top scorer.

MEMORABLE ASIAN CUP MATCH

Thailand have only once made it out of the group stage in their six previous appearances at the AFC Asian Cup, and that came in 1972 when they finished second in Group A, which saw them face Korea Republic in the semi-finals. While they lost that match on penalties, they finished the tournament on a high note with a win over Cambodia, also on penalties, in the third-place play-off.

LEGEND

Kiatikus Senamuang, also known as 'Zico', is better known more recently as the coach who oversaw Thailand's remarkable rise in fortunes in the last five years. But before his time in the dugout he was Thailand's most decorated player, with 71 goals in 134 appearances, both of which are records.



INDIA

Record: Runners-Up 1964; Group Stage 2011, 1984



HOW THEY QUALIFIED

Despite an improving reputation, India took the long road to the 2019 AFC Asian Cup after struggling in the first phase of qualifying with just one win. A 7-1 play-off win over Laos saw them advance to the third round, where they finished top of Group A with four wins from six matches.

TOP SCORER IN QUALIFYING

Jeje Lalpekhlua was the star of the campaign for India, scoring seven goals in total, which included three goals in India's last three qualifying matches, helping seal the Blue Tigers qualification.

MEMORABLE ASIAN CUP MATCH

India have only played at three AFC Asian Cups (1964, 1984 and 2011) and you have to go back to 1964, when they were runners-up, to find their last win. On that occasion, with just four teams competing in a round-robin tournament, India started their campaign on a stunning note with a 2-0 win over Korea Republic, who had won the previous two editions of the tournament.

LEGEND

Sunil Chhetri (pictured) is the heart and soul of this Indian side, and the 34-year-old will appear in his second AFC Asian Cup after he scored two of his country's three goals in 2011. Should he score in this tournament he would become India's all-time leading scorer at the AFC Asian Cup, overtaking Inder Singh.



BAHRAIN

Record: Fourth Place 2004; Group Stage 2015, 2011, 2007, 1988



HOW THEY QUALIFIED

Bahrain followed up on their disappointing second round campaign in qualifying by topping Group E in the third round to confirm their sixth – and fifth successive – appearance in the competition. Bahrain's campaign included a 5-0 defeat of Chinese Taipei and a 4-0 win over Turkmenistan.

TOP SCORER IN QUALIFYING

Mahdi Abduljabbar, with four goals, topped Bahrain's scorers' list in qualifying. The 27-year-old netted an important brace against Singapore in the 3-0 away win that helped seal their place at UAE 2019.

MEMORABLE ASIAN CUP MATCH

Bahrain's most memorable moment came in 2004, when they finished fourth. It was, however, their historic quarter-final encounter with Uzbekistan that will remind many of Bahrain's golden generation. After a second half filled with goals, Bahrain and Uzbekistan ended normal time tied at two goals apiece thanks to a brace from Alaa Hubail. In the ensuing penalty shootout, Bahrain won 4-3 after Hubail's successful effort was followed by Leonid Koshelev's miss.

LEGEND

Bahrain's most capped player of all time, Salman Isa (pictured), earned 156 caps in an international career that spanned 11 years during which he appeared in three consecutive AFC Asian Cups, captaining the national team in 2011. At club level, he is synonymous with Bahraini side Riffa SC, and also spent five years playing in Qatar for Al Arabi SC.



AUSTRALIA

Record: Champions 2015; Runners-Up 2011; Quarter-Finals 2007



HOW THEY QUALIFIED

With qualifying for the 2018 FIFA World Cup and 2019 AFC Asian Cup combined for the first time, Australia eased their way through the first phase of qualifying, with seven wins from their eight games earning them top spot in Group B and a place in their fourth successive AFC Asian Cup.

TOP SCORER IN QUALIFYING

Age proved no barrier for Australia veteran Tim Cahill, who helped himself to eight goals, including a pair of braces against Jordan and Tajikistan and a hat-trick against Bangladesh.

MEMORABLE ASIAN CUP MATCH

Australia's finest moment since joining the AFC in 2006 came when they hosted the AFC Asian Cup in 2015, where they defeated Korea Republic 2-1 after extra-time in a thrilling final. The tournament's Most Valuable Player Massimo Luongo gave Australia a first-half lead before Son Heung-min equalised in second-half stoppage time. But an extra-time winner from James Troisi earned Australia their first Asian Cup success.

LEGEND

You can't look past Tim Cahill (pictured). Now retired, Cahill appeared at three AFC Asian Cups (2007, 2011 and 2015), scoring six goals – including three at the 2015 tournament on home soil, one of which was a spectacular scissor kick against China in the quarter-finals.



SYRIA

Record: Group Stage: 2011, 1996, 1988, 1984, 1980



HOW THEY QUALIFIED

Despite being placed in a relatively tough group, alongside Japan, in the second round and playing their games away from home, Syria managed to finish as Group E runners-up with 18 points and qualify directly to the AFC Asian Cup.

TOP SCORER IN QUALIFYING

Syrian striker Omar Khribin (pictured) excelled during qualifying with seven goals in eight games, helping Syria past teams including Afghanistan and Cambodia. Khribin also scored a brace against Singapore which included an injury-time winner.

MEMORABLE ASIAN CUP MATCH

Four years after Saudi Arabia reached the AFC Asian Cup final, they faced Syria in their first match of the 2011 AFC Asian Cup. The Qasioun Eagles managed to shock the three-time winners with Abdelrazaq Al Husain's brace in a 2-1 win in front of 15,000 fans.

LEGEND

Syria's goalkeeper in their most recent AFC Asian Cup campaign in 2011, Mosab Balhous racked up 81 caps in his ten years as the team's number one to cement himself as one of Syria's best ever players. At club level, he was part of the Al Karamah side that reached the AFC Champions League in 2006 and the AFC Cup final three years later.



PALESTINE

Record: Group Stage 2015



HOW THEY QUALIFIED

After missing out on second place in the second round of qualifying, Palestine managed to reach the 2019 AFC Asian Cup via the third round. They finished runners-up to Oman in Group D after the sides ended level on points, but the Omanis' away goal in their head-to-head encounters saw Palestine edged into second place.

TOP SCORER IN QUALIFYING

Palestine had two joint top goalscorers in qualifying in Jonathan Cantillana and Sameh Maraaba, with the former scoring a brace on two occasions, while the latter bagged four against the Maldives in an 8-1 victory.

MEMORABLE ASIAN CUP MATCH

With only one AFC Asian Cup participation to their name and no wins under their belt, Palestine have had little to celebrate besides their initial qualification in 2015. However, in their match against neighbours Jordan in the 2015 group stage, in which they were beaten 5-1, Jaka Ihbeisheh scored the nation's historic maiden AFC Asian Cup goal. Even though it was little more than a consolation, Ihbeisheh's strike will be remembered by the Palestinians for years to come.

LEGEND

Having made over a century of appearances for his nation since 2000, Palestine's legendary goalkeeper Ramzi Saleh (pictured) is undoubtedly one of the finest players to grace Palestinian football. In 2015, he had the honour of captaining his nation against Japan and Jordan at the AFC Asian Cup.



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JORDAN

Record: Quarter-Finals 2011, 2004; Group Stage 2015



HOW THEY QUALIFIED

Jordan needed to go through the third round of qualifiers after finishing behind Australia in Group B in the second round. An unbeaten run in the third round saw them top the group and qualify alongside Vietnam at the expense of Afghanistan and Cambodia.

TOP SCORER IN QUALIFYING

The third-highest goalscorer in the AFC Asian Cup qualifiers, Hamza Al Dardour's (pictured) 10 goals included two hat-tricks during the campaign, one against Bangladesh and another against Cambodia.

MEMORABLE ASIAN CUP MATCH

Jordan have two quarter-finals appearances in their three previous AFC Asian Cup outings, but arguably their most memorable game was the 1-1 draw against eventual champions Japan in their group opener at the 2011 edition, where only a Maya Yoshida header in injury time cancelled out Hassan Abdel Fattah's goal to deny Jordan a famous victory.

LEGEND

One of Jordan's most iconic players is Hassan Abdel Fattah, the country's all-time leading goalscorer. Abdel Fattah was part of the Jordan squad that made their AFC Asian Cup debut in 2004 and scored a goal in their return to the competition seven years later. He retired from international football after missing out on the squad for Australia 2015.

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KOREA REPUBLIC

Record: Champions 1960, 1956; Runners-Up 2015, 1988, 1980, 1972;
Third Place 2011, 2007, 2000, 1964; Quarter-Finals 2004, 1996; Group Stage 1984



KFA



HOW THEY QUALIFIED

Korea Republic progressed to the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019 with minimal fuss, winning all of their games in the second round of qualifying, without conceding a goal. The East Asians' nearest challengers were Lebanon, who finished 13 points adrift of the two-time winners, while Kuwait, Myanmar and Laos were the other sides that could not handle the continental powerhouse.

TOP SCORER IN QUALIFYING

Son Heung-min (pictured) bagged six goals in qualifying as his class again shone through, with a hat-trick against Laos the highlight for the Tottenham Hotspur forward.

MEMORABLE ASIAN CUP MATCH

Korea Republic have been runners-up four times and have not won the continental title since 1960 as they struggle to end their lengthy drought. But the Taeguk Warriors did win the first two editions of the tournament, with a narrow 2-1 victory over Israel in the round-robin 1956 AFC Asian Cup ultimately securing their maiden title as they finished a point ahead of the Israelis.

LEGEND

No player has more caps for Korea Republic than the 136 earned by Hong Myung-bo, who skippered the East Asians to third place at the 2000 AFC Asian Cup. A composed defender who is regarded as one of the Taeguk Warriors' greatest ever players, Hong also appeared in four FIFA World Cups between 1990 and 2002.



CHINA PR

Record: Runners-Up 2004, 1984; Third Place 1992, 1976; Fourth Place 2000, 1988; Quarter-Finals 2015, 1996; Group Stage 2011, 2007, 1980



HOW THEY QUALIFIED

China made hard work of what looked like a comfortable group for them in the second round of qualifying. They registered routine wins against Bhutan and the Maldives, but a pair of 0-0 draws against Hong Kong made things difficult. However, a 2-0 win over Qatar in their final match secured their spot.

TOP SCORER IN QUALIFYING

Yang Xu was a standout for China in qualifying, showing no mercy in big wins against the Maldives and Bhutan to register eight goals – seven of which came against Bhutan.

MEMORABLE ASIAN CUP MATCH

Despite playing in the final on two occasions, in 1984 and again in 2004, China have never lifted the AFC Asian Cup. Arguably their finest win came in 2004 when, as hosts, they faced the Islamic Republic of Iran in the semi-final. With the scores locked at 1-1 after full-time, China prevailed in a dramatic penalty shootout to advance to the final against Japan.

LEGEND

Fan Zhiyi (pictured) enjoyed a glittering ten-year career for the national team, earning 106 caps, making him the third most capped player in China's history. He forged a successful career in Europe with Crystal Palace and Dundee, while he was also the first Chinese player to win the AFC Player of the Year award.

KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

Record: Tournament Debut



HOW THEY QUALIFIED

Kyrgyz Republic lost only two games, both of which came at the hands of Australia. Four wins from their other six matches saw them finish third and advance to the final round of qualifying where they finished second in Group A behind India.

TOP SCORER IN QUALIFYING

There was a clear standout for the White Falcons in qualifying and that was Anton Zemlianukhin (pictured), who contributed ten of their 24 goals, scoring a brace on three occasions.

MEMORABLE ASIAN CUP MATCH

The 2019 AFC Asian Cup will mark Kyrgyz Republic's first appearance at the tournament, but their crowning moment in qualifying came in the rescheduled match against Myanmar in Korea Republic. Knowing victory would secure their maiden qualification, Kyrgyz Republic ran rampant in a 5-1 win which caused wild celebrations among the players and their fans.

LEGEND

Ruslan Sydykov was integral to the national team over a 16-year period from 1997 to 2013. The defender was captain of the team that finished third at the 2006 AFC Challenge Cup – their best performance at the tournament – and was twice named the country's footballer of the year, in 2005 and 2006.

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PHILIPPINES

Record: Tournament Debut



HOW THEY QUALIFIED

The Philippines started with wins against Bahrain and Yemen, which set them up to finish third in Group H and advance directly to the final round of qualifying. Grouped with Yemen, Tajikistan and Nepal, the Azkals went undefeated to top Group F and qualify for their first AFC Asian Cup.

TOP SCORER IN QUALIFYING

Phil Younghusband (pictured) has been a key player for the Philippines over the last decade and he proved his importance to the team with five of their 21 goals in qualifying.

MEMORABLE ASIAN CUP MATCH

This will be the Philippines' first appearance at the AFC Asian Cup, but their most thrilling qualifying match came in the final qualifier against Tajikistan which they needed to win or draw to secure qualification. Down 1-0 with 16 minutes remaining, Kevin Ingreso levelled the scores before a penalty from Phil Younghusband in the 91st minute secured the win amidst euphoric scenes.

LEGEND

Paulino Alcantara is by far the most famous Filipino footballer, with a storied history in Spain whilst at the legendary FC Barcelona in the early 1900s. In 1917 he helped the Philippines beat Japan 15-2 in the Far Eastern Championship Games, still their biggest win to this day.



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IR IRAN

Record: Champions 1976, 1972, 1968; Third Place 2004, 1996, 1988, 1980; Fourth Place 1984; Quarter-Finals 2015, 2011, 2007, 2000; Group Stage 1992



HOW THEY QUALIFIED

With a goal difference of plus 23, the Islamic Republic of Iran breezed through Group D in the second round of qualifying with six wins and two draws to progress to the 2019 AFC Asian Cup. Team Melli were equally good defensively, conceding only three goals in eight games.

TOP SCORER IN QUALIFYING

Sardar Azmoun topped Iran's goalscoring chart with seven goals in eight games, excelling as his country qualified for the AFC Asian Cup. He scored two seven-minute braces, against Guam and Oman.

MEMORABLE ASIAN CUP MATCH

Iran have had many memorable AFC Asian Cup matches over the decades, but arguably their most important came in 1976 when they won the AFC Asian Cup for the third time. Iran reached the final with relative ease and faced Kuwait in front of 100,000 fans at the Aryamehr Stadium. A 71st-minute goal by Ali Parvin was enough for Iran to win the trophy.

LEGEND

The all-time top goalscorer in international football, the all time AFC Asian Cup top scorer and 1999 AFC Player of the Year. All of these records make it impossible to overlook Ali Daei (pictured) as Iran's greatest.



IRAQ

Record: Champions 2007; Fourth Place 2015, 1976; Quarter-Finals 2011, 2004, 2000, 1996; Group Stage 1972



HOW THEY QUALIFIED

Former champions Iraq finished two points behind first-placed Thailand to qualify as the second round's best runners-up with 12 points. The West Asians edged out Vietnam and Chinese Taipei in Group F.

TOP SCORER IN QUALIFYING

Even at the age of 37 nothing could stop Younis Mahmoud (pictured) from being a key player in Iraq's line-up as he scored four goals in six games, before announcing his retirement in 2016.

MEMORABLE ASIAN CUP MATCH

Who can forget Iraq's historic AFC Asian Cup triumph in 2007, when they beat three-time winners Saudi Arabia to the trophy thanks to none other than Younis Mahmoud? In front of 60,000 fans at Gelora Bung Karno Stadium in Jakarta, Mahmoud leapt to head home a corner to score the winner in the 72nd minute and help the Lions of Mesopotamia lift AFC Asian Cup trophy for the first and, to date, only time.

LEGEND

If Younis Mahmoud is Iraq's undisputed continental hero, then Ahmed Radhi is their international superstar. The iconic forward represented the country between 1982 and 1997, leading them to qualify for their only FIFA World Cup, in 1986. In Mexico, he scored Iraq's lone goal in the tournament, against Belgium.

VIETNAM



Record: Quarter-Finals 2007



HOW THEY QUALIFIED

Two wins against Chinese Taipei were enough for Vietnam to secure third spot in Group F in the first phase of qualifying, ensuring they went directly to the third and final round. Grouped with Jordan, Afghanistan and Cambodia, they went undefeated in the final phase to ensure they returned to the tournament for the first time since 2007.

TOP SCORER IN QUALIFYING

Two players at the opposite ends of their careers shared top billing for Vietnam, with veteran striker Le Cong Vinh and young gun Nguyen Van Toan each scoring three goals across both rounds of qualification.

MEMORABLE ASIAN CUP MATCH

Hosting the tournament in 2007 – after previously twice appearing as South Vietnam – the Southeast Asians secured their maiden win at the AFC Asian Cup with a 2-0 win over the United Arab Emirates in front of a full house at My Dinh Stadium in Hanoi. Two goals in ten minutes midway through the second half from Huynh Quang Thanh and Le Cong Vinh secured the historic win.

LEGEND

At only 33, Le Cong Vinh (pictured) is still young enough to be playing for the national team, but instead he surprised everyone when he announced his retirement in 2016. With 83 caps and 51 goals to his name, he is far and away Vietnam's most capped and highest scoring player.



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YEMEN

Record: Tournament Debut



HOW THEY QUALIFIED

Yemen recovered superbly after finishing the second round of qualifying bottom of Group H. They proceeded to defeat the Maldives 4-0 on aggregate in the play-off round to advance to the third round. Here, they defied all odds to finish second in Group F and qualify for the continental tournament.

TOP SCORER IN QUALIFYING

Abdulwasea Al Matari (pictured) scored five goals in qualifying, with his most important goals coming in Yemen's final match against Nepal, where he scored a brace to help his side qualify for their first AFC Asian Cup.

MEMORABLE ASIAN CUP MATCH

Having never previously qualified for the AFC Asian Cup, Yemen's most memorable match is undeniably the 2-1 win against Nepal which saw them book their place at UAE 2019. Top scorer Abdulwasea Al Matari opened the scoring in the 24th minute, before Nepal equalised on the stroke of half-time. With just six minutes of the game left, Al Matari scored a penalty to seal Yemen's historic win.

LEGEND

Ali Al Nono is arguably the most well-known Yemeni footballer outside the country. The forward bagged 40 goals in a Yemen shirt before retiring in 2010. Al Nono plied his trade for clubs across Bahrain, Sudan, Syria and Egypt as well as his native country where he was synonymous with Al Ahli Sanaa.



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SAUDI ARABIA

Record: Champions 1996, 1988, 1984;
Runners-Up 2007, 2000, 1992; Group Stage: 2015, 2011, 2004



HOW THEY QUALIFIED

Saudi Arabia went through the AFC Asian Cup qualifiers undefeated with six wins and two draws to top their group, which included hosts the United Arab Emirates and fellow participants Palestine. They managed to win all their home games including a 7-0 thrashing of Timor-Leste.

TOP SCORER IN QUALIFYING

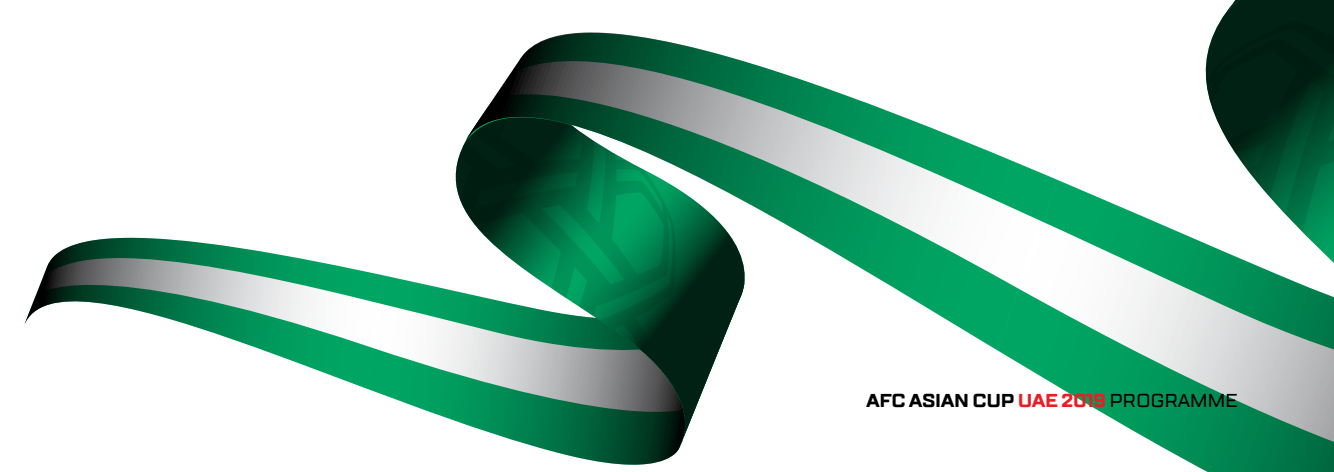
Mohammed Al Sahlawi was the top scorer in overall qualifying with 14 goals, including hat-tricks against Timor-Leste and Palestine and a brace against the Emiratis.

MEMORABLE ASIAN CUP MATCH

Saudi Arabia are three-time winners of the AFC Asian Cup, but arguably their most memorable win came in front of 60,000 fans at Zayed Sport City Stadium in Abu Dhabi. Despite playing with ten men for over half an hour, the Green Falcons edged hosts the UAE on penalties to lift their third, and to date last, title.

LEGEND

One of the most decorated players in the continent, Sami Al Jaber (pictured) was the first Asian player to score in three FIFA World Cups. He won the AFC Asian Cup in 1996 and four years later became a continental champion at club level with Al Hilal. Al Jaber is Saudi Arabia's second highest goalscorer, with 46 goals in 152 caps.





QATAR

Record: Quarter-Finals 2011, 2000;
Group Stage: 2015, 2007, 2004, 1992, 1988, 1984, 1980



HOW THEY QUALIFIED

With only one loss in eight games, Qatar topped Group C in the second round of qualifying ahead of China, in second place, by four points. The Maroons scored 29 goals, with almost half of them coming against Bhutan in a resounding 15-0 win.

TOP SCORER IN QUALIFYING

Qatar's top scorer was Al Sadd midfielder Hassan Al Haydos (pictured), who scored five goals in eight games for his nation; four of his goals came in the two matches against Bhutan.

MEMORABLE ASIAN CUP MATCH

Qatar have never surpassed the quarter-finals, but despite their loss to Japan on home soil during that stage in 2011, the match is still seen as one of the country's best in their continental history. Qatar took the lead twice through Sebastian Soria and Fabio Cesat, but each time Shinji Kagawa equalised for the Samurai Blue. Masahiko Inoha's injury-time strike denied Qatar the chance of reaching a historic semi-final.

LEGEND

Qatar's iconic number 15 Mansoor Muftah represented the nation in three AFC Asian Cup editions in 1980, 1984 and 1988 before retiring in 1990. The striker was the Qatari League's top scorer in four seasons between 1981 and 1986 and is the competition's all-time top scorer with 179 goals.

LEBANON



Record: Group Stage 2000



HOW THEY QUALIFIED

After finishing runners-up behind Korea Republic in the second round of qualifiers, the Cedars eased past their opponents in the third round, qualifying at the top of Group B with 16 points out of 18. The highlight of their campaign was a 5-0 thrashing of DPR Korea.

TOP SCORER IN QUALIFYING

Electric forward Hassan Maatouk (pictured) scored seven goals for Lebanon in qualifying, with arguably the most important of them coming against Hong Kong, when his 43rd-minute penalty confirmed Lebanon's qualification.

MEMORABLE ASIAN CUP MATCH

Lebanon have only ever played three matches at the AFC Asian Cup in their history and are winless, but it was their first point against Iraq at the competition they hosted in 2000 which remains their best memory up until now. Lebanon came from 2-0 down in the first 25 minutes to draw level thanks to goals from Abbas Chahrour and Moussa Hojeij.

LEGEND

Roda Antar is widely acknowledged as Lebanon's best ever player on the back of his record tally of 20 goals for the national team. The current manager of Racing Beirut retired in 2017 after a decade playing in Germany and a successful four-year spell at China's Shandong Luneng.

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DPR KOREA

Record: Fourth Place: 1980; Group Stage 2015, 2011, 1992



HOW THEY QUALIFIED

DPR Korea finished runners-up behind Uzbekistan in the second round of qualifying to advance to the next stage, where they were drawn alongside Lebanon, Hong Kong and Malaysia. The Lebanese topped the group but, after picking up just two points from their first three games, the East Asians won their last three fixtures to also secure qualification.

TOP SCORER IN QUALIFYING

Kim Yu-song (pictured) netted six goals en route to the tournament, all of which came in the third round of qualifying, including a hat-trick in a 4-1 win in Malaysia.

MEMORABLE ASIAN CUP MATCH

The East Asians are appearing in their fifth AFC Asian Cup but it was their first, in 1980, that remains their best performance. After falling behind against China in the group stage, DPR Korea responded well to claim a historic 2-1 victory before eventually progressing to the semi-finals, where they narrowly lost to neighbours Korea Republic.

LEGEND

The name Pak Doo-ik is synonymous with DPR Korea football as it was his goal that secured a 1-0 victory over Italy in 1966 and one of the most famous upsets in FIFA World Cup history. It remains a shame that Pak never got the chance to showcase his talents at the AFC Asian Cup.

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JAPAN



Record: Champions 2011, 2004, 2000, 1992;
Fourth Place 2007; Quarter-Finals 2015, 1996; Group Stage 1988



HOW THEY QUALIFIED

The Samurai Blue were one of 12 teams to secure their qualification for the 2019 AFC Asian Cup after the first round of qualifying, breezing through Group E with seven wins and one draw from their eight matches. And they did it all without conceding a goal, while scoring 27 of their own.

TOP SCORER IN QUALIFYING

The attacking trio of Keisuke Honda, Shinji Kagawa and Shinji Okazaki contributed more than half of Japan's 27 goals, but it was Honda who scored the most with six.

MEMORABLE ASIAN CUP MATCH

With four continental titles to their name, Japan have had more memorable matches than most, but it's hard to look past their triumph in 2004 against host nation China in Beijing. In front of a hostile capacity crowd at Workers' Stadium Japan struck first, but an equaliser ten minutes later levelled it at 1-1 at half-time. Japan's class shone through in the second half, with two further goals sealing a memorable 3-1 win.

LEGEND

Naohiro Takahara (pictured) was a standout performer for the Samurai Blue at the 2000 and 2007 editions, with nine goals across the two tournaments. In 2007 he tied for the Golden Boot with Younis Mahmoud and Yasser Al Qahtani with four goals, while he bagged five in 2000 as Japan went all the way.



UZBEKISTAN

Record: Fourth Place 2011;
Quarter-Finals 2015, 2007, 2004; Group Stage 2000, 1996



HOW THEY QUALIFIED

The White Wolves' campaign started on an ominous note, when they were trailing 4-0 at half-time in their opening match against DPR Korea. The eventual 4-2 defeat was Uzbekistan's only loss of the campaign, as they won their remaining seven matches to finish top of Group H, conceding just a further three goals in the process.

TOP SCORER IN QUALIFYING

Sardor Rashidov, the flashy and exciting 27-year-old attacker, scored a quarter of Uzbekistan's goals in qualifying, finding the back of the net five times in eight matches.

MEMORABLE ASIAN CUP MATCH

The White Wolves have often threatened to take the next step and join Asia's elite, and in 2011 they made their maiden AFC Asian Cup semi-final after a 2-1 win over Jordan. In both 2004 and 2007 Uzbekistan had been eliminated at the quarter-final stage, but two goals from veteran striker Ulugbek Bakayev inside the first five minutes of the second half secured a memorable win.

LEGEND

Uzbekistan have produced a number of sensational players, but arguably their best has been dynamic midfielder Server Djeparov (pictured). Uzbekistan's most capped player with more than 120 caps, and their fourth all-time leading scorer, the 36-year-old has also twice been crowned the continent's best player in 2008 and 2011.



OMAN

Record: Group Stage 2015, 2007, 2004



HOW THEY QUALIFIED

After failing to finish as one of the best runners-up in the second round of qualifying, Oman progressed from the third round by winning Group D with 15 points, with away goals in the head-to-head between themselves and Palestine seeing the Sultanate take top spot.

TOP SCORER IN QUALIFYING

Khalid Al Hajri and Abdulaziz Al Muqbali led Oman's goalscoring efforts with eight goals each. In the 14-0 win over Bhutan, Al Muqbali scored six, while Al Hajri grabbed four.

MEMORABLE ASIAN CUP MATCH

Oman have not gone past the group stage in their three AFC Asian Cup appearances so far, but they did cause an upset that almost saw them qualify for the 2004 edition's knockout stage. After a nine-minute first-half brace from Imad Al Hosni saw them go into half-time with a 2-0 lead against the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ali Karimi and Mohamad Nosrati scored to equalise and deny Oman a vital win.

LEGEND

Oman's national side boast a living legend in Ali Al Habsi (pictured). The goalkeeper has been the face of Omani football for over 15 years with more than a century of caps to his name. Al Habsi spent 11 years in English football, playing for clubs including Wigan Athletic and Bolton Wanderers.



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TURKMENISTAN

Record: Group Stage 2004



HOW THEY QUALIFIED

Turkmenistan's qualifying campaign got off to an inauspicious start, with a loss to Guam in their opening match and they went without a win in their first three matches. They recovered to win four of their next five to advance to the final round where they finished second in Group E.

TOP SCORER IN QUALIFYING

In total, Turkmenistan scored 19 goals in 14 matches across both rounds of qualifying, with 25-year-old striker Altymyrat Annadurdyev (pictured) and veteran midfielder Arslanmyrat Amanov each contributing three goals.

MEMORABLE ASIAN CUP MATCH

The Turkmenians have only appeared at one previous AFC Asian Cup tournament back in 2004, and in their first match they produced an upset with a 2-2 draw against continental powerhouse Saudi Arabia. Nazar Bayramov opened the scoring in the sixth minute, before a brace from Yasser Al Qahtani looked to have sealed the win for the Saudis. But a 93rd-minute goal from Begencmuhammet Kulyyev secured a historic point for Turkmenistan.

LEGEND

Turkmenistan have only had a short continental history, playing their first match in 1992, but one player that stands out is Vladimir Bayramov. A member of their 2004 AFC Asian Cup squad, he scored in their narrow 3-2 loss to Iraq and scored 11 times in total including in three consecutive FIFA World Cup qualifying campaigns.

THE PATH TO GLORY

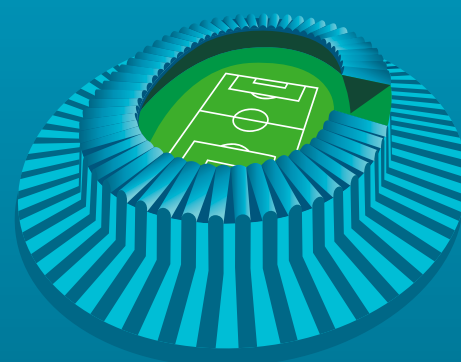
ZAYED SPORTS CITY STADIUM WILL HOST THE FINAL OF THE 2019 AFC ASIAN CUP, WHILE VENUES IN DUBAI, AL AIN AND SHARJAH WILL ALSO HOST GAMES DURING THE CONTINENTAL SHOWPIECE.



Zayed Sports City Stadium, Abu Dhabi

With both a history that goes back over 37 years and a recent renovation, Zayed Sports City Stadium combines heritage with modernity. The venue, inaugurated in 1980, hosted its biggest tournament to date when the UAE staged the 1996 AFC Asian Cup, with Zayed Sports City Stadium the venue for the showpiece finale.

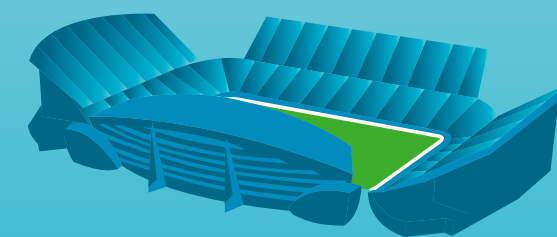
Since then, the FIFA Under-20 World Cup and FIFA Club World Cups graced the ground before it underwent a major renovation in 2009. A traditional, open-air stadium that is defined by iconic arches on its exterior, Zayed Sports City Stadium is the perfect setting for the 2019 title showdown.



Mohammed Bin Zayed Stadium, Abu Dhabi

Home to UAE Pro League side Al Jazira, Mohammed Bin Zayed Stadium, built in 1979, is the capital's oldest football stadium. The venue saw a complete overhaul that lasted three years between 2006 and 2009 and, upon its reopening, its capacity was increased from 15,000 to 42,000. Centrally located in Abu Dhabi's Al

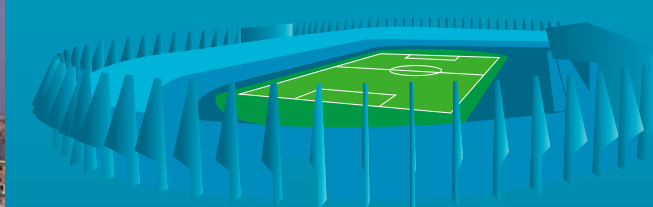
Muroor district, the stadium includes a hospital, a boutique style hotel and an Olympic size swimming pool. In recent years, Mohammed Bin Zayed Stadium has hosted the FIFA Club World Cup on three occasions, namely in 2009, 2010 and 2017. The stadium was also home to the UAE national team during their 2018 FIFA World Cup qualifying campaign.



Al Nahyan Stadium, Abu Dhabi



Abu Dhabi's newest stadium offers a unique setting against a backdrop of high-rise buildings from its location in the heart of Abu Dhabi's downtown. It is connected to the modern Al Wahda Mall and sits opposite the city's main bus terminal. The stadium was opened in 1995 by Crown Prince Naruhito of Japan



alongside current UAE President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan. The permanent residents of Al Nahyan Stadium are four-time UAE Pro League champions Al Wahda, who will see their stadium upgraded to a capacity of 15,000 in preparation for the 2019 AFC Asian Cup.



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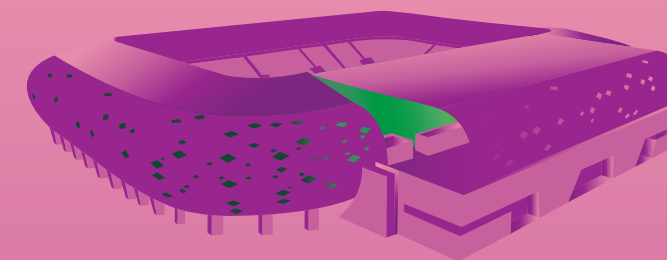
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Al Maktoum Stadium, Dubai

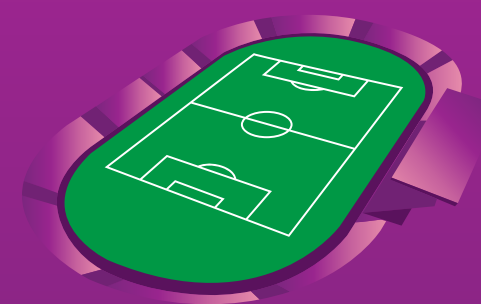


Notable for its distinct blue colour, Al Maktoum Stadium is undergoing a complete renovation ahead of the AFC Asian Cup, seeing its capacity upgraded from 10,750 to 12,000. The stadium hosted games during the 2003 FIFA Youth Championship and is the perennial venue for the UAE League Cup final. The stadium is home to Al Nasr, the oldest football club in the country,

founded in 1945. The historic ground hosted the maiden Dubai derby between Al Nasr and arch-rivals Al Wasl. Al Maktoum Stadium was opened in 1978 and it is located in the old downtown area of Bur Dubai, within walking distance of "Oud Metha Station" on the green line of Dubai Metro.



Rashid Stadium, Dubai



Just two miles away from Dubai International Airport, and near the border with Sharjah, lies Rashid Stadium, home of 2015 AFC Champions League finalists Al Ahli FC and one of two host grounds in Dubai. The stadium continues to host the home fixtures of Al Ahli FC following the merger of Al Ahli and Al Shabab in 2017.

Built in 1948 in the historic Deira district of Dubai, Rashid Stadium hosted the semi-finals of the 2003 FIFA World Youth Championship and the 2013 FIFA U-17 World Cup. The facilities at Rashid Stadium include multiple training pitches, cafes and the club store. The stadium is conveniently served by the Dubai Metro red line, with the "Stadium Station" directly connected to the venue.



新聞は
楽しい！
「ちよい読み」
からはじめよう！

林修 さん

新聞には、
ハツとする
お宝が
たくさんあるんです。

石田 さん
ひかり さん
女優

ちよい読みは、
夕刊から
で「まあいいさ」。

清水 さん
三チコ さん
タレント

ちよい
読み
楽しむ。

新朝
聞日

新聞がもっと楽しくなる!! スペシャルサイトOPEN!!

気になるものを
少しずつ
読んでいくだけで、必ずいつか
役に立つ
ときが来ます。

MASUDA JULIA
増田 さん
ユリヤ さん
ジャーナリスト

マクラがあつて、オチがある。
天声人語は
まさに
落語。

SHUNPOTEI SHOKICHI
春風亭 さん
昇吉 さん
落語家



ちよい読み
インタビュー
公開中!

朝日新聞 ちよい読み 検索

Hazza Bin Zayed Stadium, Al Ain

The award-winning Hazza Bin Zayed Stadium is a multi-purpose 25,000 capacity venue in Al Ain. The stadium covers an area of 45,000 square metres and is 50 metres high, making it one of the tallest buildings in Al Ain. The complex surrounding the stadium features an array of restaurants and shops in addition to Al Ain club offices.

The exterior design is based on the trunk of the palm tree, an integral part of the UAE's heritage and legacy, while a sinuous and gravity-bending parasol roof shades the pitch and the spectators during matches. Opened in 2014, the striking landmark was used for the UAE's FIFA World Cup Russia 2018 qualifiers and the 2016 AFC Champions League final.



Khalifa Bin Zayed Stadium, Al Ain

Named after the current president of the UAE, Khalifa Bin Zayed Stadium is one of the oldest football stadiums in the country, built in 1971 and refurbished in 2002. The ground played host to Al Ain's home fixtures prior to the opening of Hazza Bin Zayed Stadium in 2014. It is now the team's main training ground and home to its football academy.

One of two host venues in Al Ain, the 12,000-capacity stadium is easily located thanks to the iconic arch covering its main stand. Fans visiting the Khalifa Bin Zayed Stadium will find themselves at the heart of multiple tourist attractions with Al Ain Oasis, the UAE's first UNESCO World Heritage site, and Al Ain National Museum both located within walking distance of the venue.





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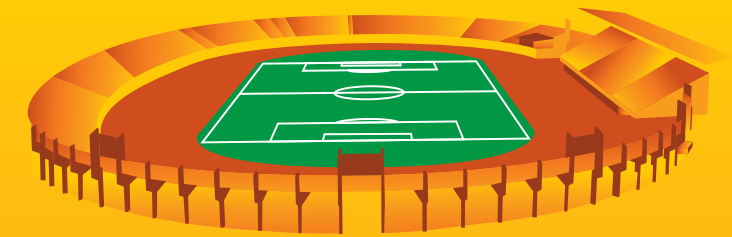
2.5L SE

THE WAYS TO SCORE.

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Sharjah Stadium, Sharjah



Situated in Sharjah, the cultural heart of the UAE, Sharjah Stadium is the only one of the eight 2019 AFC Asian Cup venues located outside the emirates of Abu Dhabi and Dubai. Sharjah Stadium is one of the country's most historic stadiums as it is home to Sharjah Sports Club, the UAE's inaugural league champions in the 1973/74 season and one of the nation's most decorated football teams.

The Sharjah Sports Club academy has produced some of the country's finest players, including the bulk of the UAE side that represented the country at the 1990 FIFA World Cup. With a capacity of 11,073, Sharjah Stadium is the smallest of the host venues but is part of a larger sports complex that also includes the iconic Sharjah Cricket Stadium.



THE SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OF THE EMIRATES

ABU DHABI

As you enter Abu Dhabi Island from the south, you are greeted by the imperious structure of the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque. With a capacity of 40,000 worshippers, it is one of the world's largest mosques. Its all-white exterior engulfs stunning calligraphy-decorated walls, while the main prayer hall features the world's largest chandelier and carpet. The jewel in the crown of Abu Dhabi's cultural district of Saadiyat Island is the prestigious Louvre Abu Dhabi

Museum, bringing international works of art alongside those from local Emirati artists. No trip to the UAE capital is complete without visiting the entertainment hub that is Yas Island; from theme parks such as Ferrari World and Warner Brothers World to a mega shopping mall and a 45-ride waterpark, Yas Island is the place to have all the fun in Abu Dhabi.



DUBAI

Dubai's most iconic landmark, Burj Khalifa, offers stunning views of the city from its 555-meter high observation deck. The tower is accessible directly from the Dubai Mall, which features an indoor aquarium, Olympic-size ice rink and 26-screen cinema complex. Don't miss the mesmerising Dubai fountain show set against the Burj Khalifa backdrop in the evenings. Once you have enjoyed the glam and glitter, you can see the historic side of Dubai. A walk alongside the Dubai Creek from the central bus station takes you through the



narrow alleyways of Bur Dubai to the traditional 'Abra' ferry station where you can cross the creek for as little as one Dirham. Venture further north and you will reach the Dubai Museum and the 19th century Al Fahidi Historic district with its wind towers, old houses and art galleries.

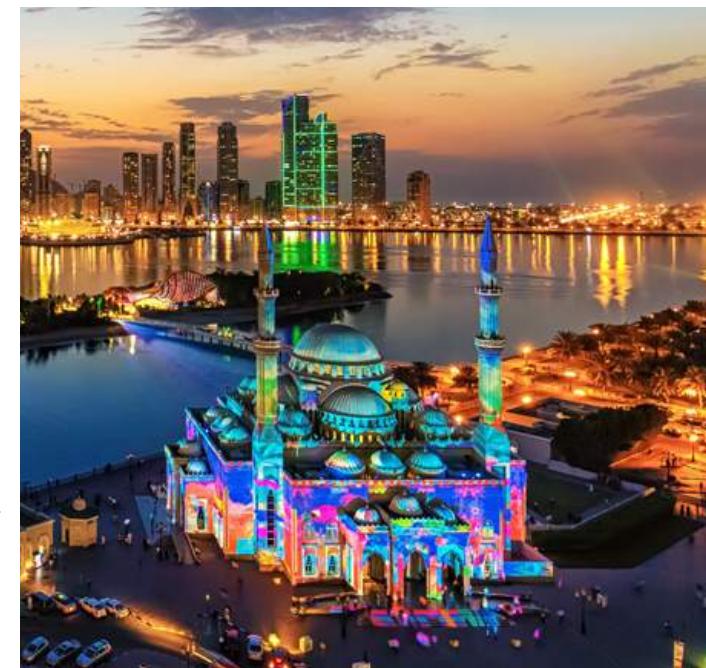
AL AIN

Spreading across the UAE-Oman border is the 1,240-meter-high Jebel Hafeet, the UAE's second highest peak. Stop in any of the numerous viewpoints along the winding drive up the mountain for scenic views of the Garden City. At the foot of the mountain is the Green Mubazzarah park with its hot water springs, 1.6 million square metres of green space and dedicated barbeque areas, offering a perfect spot for a picnic. Recognisable for Asian football fans from the crest of Al Ain,

the UAE's most successful club, is Al Jahili Fort. The 19th century fort served as home to Abu Dhabi's royal Al Nahyan family for decades before being transformed into a cultural centre and gallery.

SHARJAH

Perhaps the most prominent landmark of "The Smiling Emirate" is the Central Souq (Arabic for market). The 600 shops, housed within the two adjacent impressive structures, offer everything from carpets to video games. A visit to the Souq is not complete without a taste of Masala



Corn from any of the stalls scattered around the area. While in Sharjah, you can stroll down the canal-side promenade of Al Qasba, enjoy a meal at any of its outdoor eateries or take in city views from the "Eye of the Emirates" Ferris Wheel. Whether you are interested in classic cars, calligraphy or marine life, there is a museum for you in Sharjah. The city, recognised by UNESCO as the Cultural Capital of the Arab World, is home to no less than 16 museums, so there is plenty to do when you are not following AFC Asian Cup action.



Group A	
A1	UAE
A2	Thailand
A3	India
A4	Bahrain

UAE VS Bahrain	Thailand VS India
Sat Jan 5 Zayed Sports City Stadium, Abu Dhabi	Sun Jan 6 Al Nahyan Stadium, Abu Dhabi
India VS UAE	Bahrain VS Thailand
Thu Jan 10 Zayed Sports City Stadium, Abu Dhabi	Thu Jan 10 Al Maktoum Stadium, Dubai
UAE VS Thailand	India VS Bahrain
Mon Jan 14 Hazza Bin Zayed Stadium, Al Ain	Mon Jan 14 Sharjah Stadium, Sharjah

Group B	
B1	Australia
B2	Syria
B3	Palestine
B4	Jordan

Australia VS Jordan	Syria VS Palestine
Sun Jan 6 Hazza Bin Zayed Stadium, Al Ain	Sun Jan 6 Sharjah Stadium, Sharjah
Jordan VS Syria	Palestine VS Australia
Thu Jan 10 Khalifa Bin Zayed Stadium, Al Ain	Fri Jan 11 Rashid Stadium, Dubai
Australia VS Syria	Palestine VS Jordan
Mon Jan 15 Khalifa Bin Zayed Stadium, Al Ain	Mon Jan 15 Mohammed Bin Zayed Stadium, Abu Dhabi

Group C	
C1	Korea Republic
C2	China PR
C3	Kyrgyz Republic
C4	Philippines

Korea Republic VS Philippines	China PR VS Kyrgyz Republic
Mon Jan 7 Al Maktoum Stadium, Dubai	Mon Jan 7 Khalifa Bin Zayed Stadium, Al Ain
Kyrgyz Republic VS Korea Republic	Philippines VS China PR
Fri Jan 11 Hazza Bin Zayed Stadium, Al Ain	Fri Jan 11 Mohammed Bin Zayed Stadium, Abu Dhabi
Korea Republic VS China PR	Kyrgyz Republic VS Philippines
Wed Jan 16 Al Nahyan Stadium, Abu Dhabi	Wed Jan 16 Rashid Stadium, Dubai

Group D	
D1	IR Iran
D2	Iraq
D3	Vietnam
D4	Yemen

IR Iran VS Yemen	Iraq VS Vietnam
Mon Jan 7 Mohammed Bin Zayed Stadium, Abu Dhabi	Tue Jan 8 Zayed Sports City Stadium, Abu Dhabi
Vietnam VS IR Iran	Yemen VS Iraq
Sat Jan 12 Al Nahyan Stadium, Abu Dhabi	Sat Jan 12 Sharjah Stadium, Sharjah
IR Iran VS Iraq	Vietnam VS Yemen
Wed Jan 16 Al Maktoum Stadium, Dubai	Wed Jan 16 Hazza Bin Zayed Stadium, Al Ain

Group E	
E1	Saudi Arabia
E2	Qatar
E3	Lebanon
E4	DPR Korea

Saudi Arabia VS DPR Korea	Qatar VS Lebanon
Tue Jan 8 Rashid Stadium, Dubai	Wed Jan 9 Hazza Bin Zayed Stadium, Al Ain
Lebanon VS Saudi Arabia	DPR Korea VS Qatar
Sat Jan 12 Al Maktoum Stadium, Dubai	Sun Jan 13 Khalifa Bin Zayed Stadium, Al Ain
Saudi Arabia VS Qatar	Lebanon VS DPR Korea
Thu Jan 17 Zayed Sports City Stadium, Abu Dhabi	Thu Jan 17 Sharjah Stadium, Sharjah

Group F	
F1	Japan
F2	Uzbekistan
F3	Oman
F4	Turkmenistan

Japan VS Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan VS Oman
Wed Jan 9 Al Nahyan Stadium, Abu Dhabi	Wed Jan 9 Sharjah Stadium, Sharjah
Oman VS Japan	Turkmenistan VS Uzbekistan
Sun Jan 13 Zayed Sports City Stadium, Abu Dhabi	Sun Jan 13 Rashid Stadium, Dubai
Japan VS Uzbekistan	Oman VS Turkmenistan
Thu Jan 17 Khalifa Bin Zayed Stadium, Al Ain	Thu Jan 17 Mohammed Bin Zayed Stadium, Abu Dhabi

Round of 16
2nd Group A VS 2nd Group C
Sun Jan 20 Hazza Bin Zayed Stadium, Al Ain

Round of 16
1st Group D VS 3rd Group B/E/F
Sun Jan 20 Mohammed Bin Zayed Stadium, Abu Dhabi

Round of 16
1st Group B VS 3rd Group A/C/D
Sun Jan 20 Al Maktoum Stadium, Dubai

Round of 16
1st Group F VS 2nd Group E
Mon Jan 21 Sharjah Stadium, Sharjah

Quarter-Final
VS
Thu Jan 24 Mohammed Bin Zayed Stadium, Abu Dhabi

Semi-Final
VS
Mon Jan 28 Hazza Bin Zayed Stadium, Al Ain

Quarter-Final
VS
Thu Jan 24 Al Maktoum Stadium, Dubai

Round of 16
1st Group A VS 3rd Group C/D/E
Mon Jan 21 Zayed Sports City Stadium, Abu Dhabi

Round of 16
2nd Group B VS 2nd Group F
Mon Jan 21 Khalifa Bin Zayed Stadium, Al Ain

Round of 16
1st Group C VS 3rd Group A/B/F
Tue Jan 22 Rashid Stadium, Dubai

Round of 16
1st Group E VS 2nd Group D
Tue Jan 22 Al Nahyan Stadium, Abu Dhabi

Quarter-Final
VS
Fri Jan 25 Hazza Bin Zayed Stadium, Al Ain

Semi-Final
VS
Tue Jan 29 Mohammed Bin Zayed Stadium, Abu Dhabi

Quarter-Final
VS
Fri Jan 25 Zayed Sports City Stadium, Abu Dhabi

FINAL



**AFC
ASIAN CUP
UAE 2019™**

Friday Feb 1
Zayed Sports City Stadium, Abu Dhabi