



AFC
CHAMPIONS
LEAGUE

AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE 2017

TECHNICAL REPORT & STATISTICS



ONE ASIA • ONE GOAL

AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE 2017

GROUP A



AL AHLI
(UAE)



AL TAAWOUN
(KSA)



ESTEGHLAL
(IRN)



LOKOMOTIV
(UZB)

GROUP B



AL FATEH
(KSA)



AL JAZIRA
(UAE)



**ESTEGHLAL
KHOUZESTAN**
(IRN)



LEKHWIYA
(QAT)

GROUP C



AL AIN
(UAE)



AL AHLI
(KSA)



BUNYODKOR
(UZB)



ZOBAHAN
(IRN)

GROUP D



AL HILAL
(KSA)



AL RAYYAN
(QAT)



PERSEPOLIS
(IRN)



AL WAHDA
(UAE)

GROUP E



**BRISBANE
ROAR**
(AUS)



**KASHIMA
ANTLERS**
(JPN)



**MUANGTHONG
UNITED**
(THA)



**ULSAN
HYUNDAI**
(KOR)

GROUP F



FC SEOUL
(KOR)



SHANGHAI SIPG
(CHN)



**URAWA RED
DIAMONDS**
(JPN)



**WESTERN
SYDNEY
WANDERERS**
(AUS)

GROUP G



EASTERN SC
(HKG)



**GUANGZHOU
EVERGRANDE**
(CHN)



**KAWASAKI
FRONTALE**
(JPN)



**SUWON
SAMSUNG
BLUEWINGS**
(KOR)

GROUP H



**ADELAIDE
UNITED**
(AUS)



GAMBA OSAKA
(JPN)



JEJU UNITED
(KOR)



JIANGSU FC
(CHN)



**CHAMPIONS
LEAGUE**

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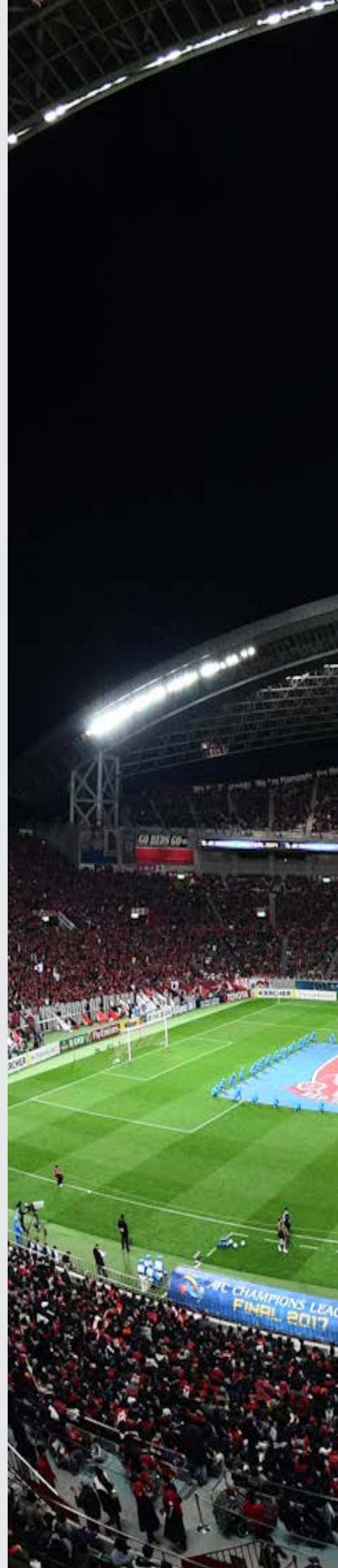
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128

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

140





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AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL 2017



Foreword by the **AFC PRESIDENT**



Dear friends

The Asian Football Confederation's (AFC) Champions League competition in 2017 reinforced its place among the leading Continental club competitions in the world.

Those of us who were privileged to be in Saitama 2002 Stadium on November 25, 2017 witnessed a stunning spectacle befitting the AFC Champions League final and we must congratulate Urawa Red Diamonds of Japan on their success.

Congratulations must also go to Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal for their magnificent contribution to an exciting final which set a new attendance record of 116,800 for the two-legged final. Another record for this ever-improving competition.

We must also thank all our competing clubs and Member Associations because without their commitment to

excellence, the club game in Asia would not be developing as rapidly as it is and this report will reflect some of the technical innovations in the competition.

This report will not only record the performances of the sides who brought colour, passion and skill to the tournament but also the latest technical trends and highlight areas in which football in Asia continues to improve.

I am grateful to the AFC Technical Committee, AFC Technical Director Andy Roxburgh, his Technical Department and the Technical Study Group for the hours they have spent watching games, analysing videos and identifying trends.

This is a valuable record of another memorable season.

Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa
AFC President

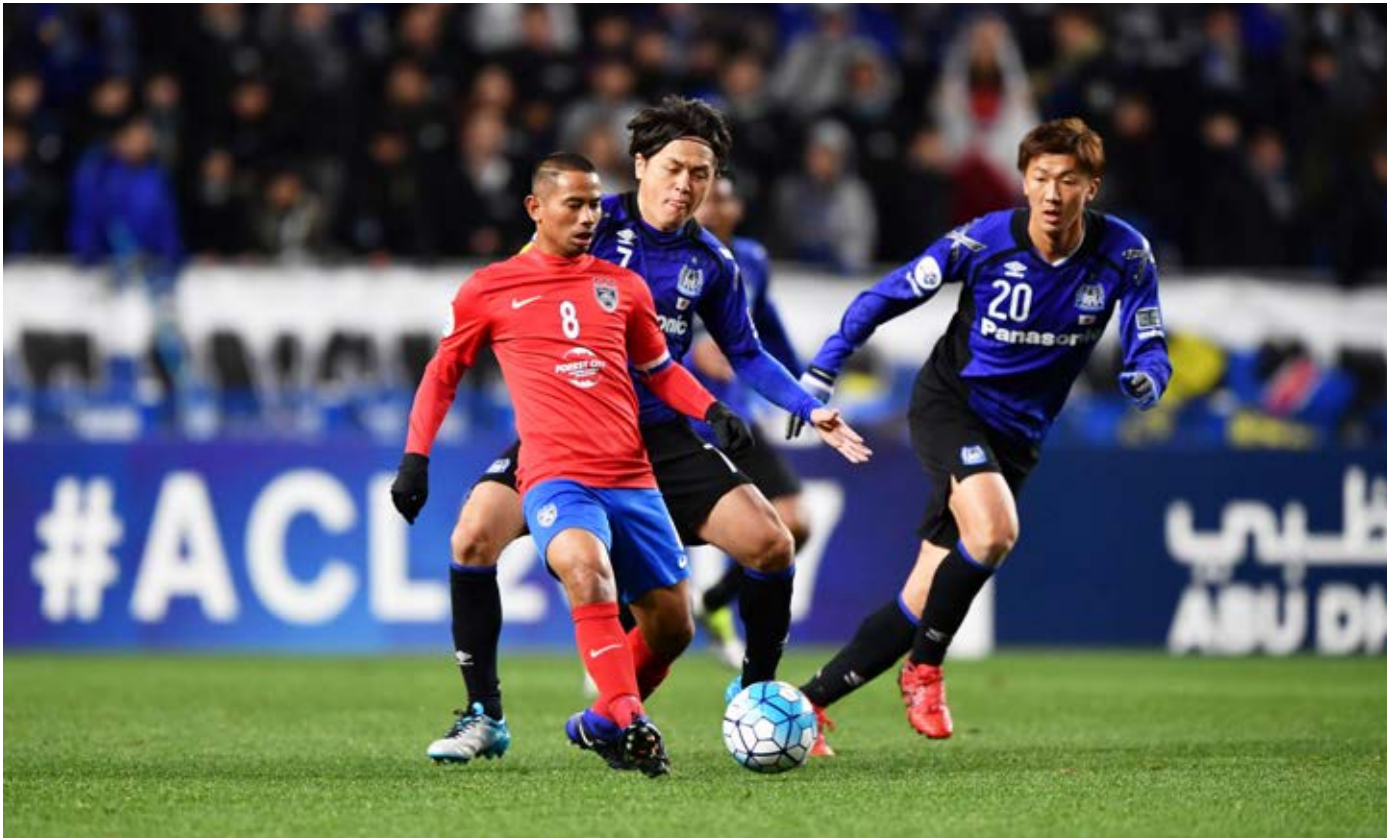




COMPETITION OVERVIEW



PLAY-OFF STAGE



The AFC Champions League's qualifying play-off involved 23 clubs from 19 Member Associations competing for the final eight places in the competition's group stage, joining the 24 clubs which had qualified automatically.

Global FC got the 2017 competition underway in historic fashion, defeating Singapore's Tampines Rovers 2-0 in the first preliminary round to become the first Filipino club to win an AFC Champions League match.

Their run was ended, however, in a 6-0 defeat to Australia's Brisbane Roar in the second Preliminary Round, while a 123rd minute goal to Lim Ka Wai ensured Hong Kong's Kitchee SC eliminated Vietnam's Ha Noi FC 3-2 after extra time in an epic match at the same stage,

Kitchee were joined in the final stage by Jordan's Al-Wehdat and Uzbekistan's FC Nasaf, who overcame Bengaluru FC and Al Hidd Club respectively, as well as Thailand's Sukhothai FC and Malaysia's Johor Darul Ta'zim, who produced a strong away performance to beat another Thai club, Bangkok United, on penalties after a 1-1 draw.

The final Playoff stage was largely dominated by home sides, with six



out of eight progressing to the final draw. Shanghai SIPG were too good for Sukhothai; with record signing Shanghai's Oscar bagging his first goal for the club in a 3-0 win, while their city rivals Shanghai Shenhua were surprised on home soil by Brisbane Roar, with two first-half goals by Brandan Borrello and Tommy Oar earning a 2-0 win for the Australian side.

Elsewhere, 2008 AFC Champions League winners Gamba Osaka overcame Johor Darul Ta'zim to secure a 3-0 win, while Emirati club Al-Wahda won by the same margin to dash Al-Wehdat's hopes.

They were joined by Saudi Arabia's Al-Fateh, who beat FC Nasaf 1-0, while Bunyodkor of Uzbekistan held out for a 0-0 draw away to Qatar's El-Jaish, to become one of three sides to qualify for the group stage by way of a penalty shootout, prevailing 3-1 on spot kicks.

Also successful from the penalty spot were Korea Republic's Ulsan Hyundai, who held off a challenge from Hong Kong's Kitchee to win 4-3 on penalties after a 1-1 draw, and FC Esteghlal. The Iranian club delighted a massive crowd of 74,560, and returned to the group stage for the first time since 2014; eliminating Qatar's Al-Sadd 4-3 in a shootout after a 0-0 stalemate.





GROUP STAGE - WEST



GROUP A

Group A played host to the reigning league champions of the United Arab Emirates, Islamic Republic of Iran and Uzbekistan, with Al-Ahli FC (UAE) and Esteghlal FC advancing to the knockout stage at the expense of FC Lokomotiv and Saudi Arabia's Al Taawoun in a hotly contested group that remained in the balance until the final Matchday.

The events of Matchday Five will live long in the memory for fans of Asian football. With both places in the knockout stage still up for grabs, Esteghlal and Al-Ahli played out a 1-1 draw in front of a huge crowd in excess of 76,000 at Tehran's Azadi Stadium, while in Tashkent, Lokomotiv and Al Taawoun played out a remarkable 4-4 draw.

With Al Taawoun on the brink of elimination, Portuguese defender Ricardo Machado's injury time header salvaged a precious point, and kept the Saudis in contention for the knockout stage after Marat Bikmaev's hat-trick had earlier given Lokomotiv a 3-1 lead.

The prolific Bikmaev scored five times in six group stage matches - but couldn't save the Uzbek champions from elimination - while Esteghlal's Kevah Rezaei added four goals, including crucial equalisers in consecutive matches against Lokomotiv and Al Taawoun, before notching the winner against Al Taawoun on Matchday Six.

GROUP B

A dominant Lekhwiya provided fifteen goals in six matches to emerge unbeaten, and five points clear atop a group featuring Esteghlal Khouzeestan, Al-Fateh and the UAE's Al-Jazira.

Qatar's Lekhwiya stamped their authority on the group from the very beginning - with star Moroccan striker Youssef El-Arabi bagging a brace in an opening day 3-0 dismissal of Al-Jazira - and elimination never appeared likely for Djamel Belmadi's charges from then on.

The Doha-based club scored in every match, with their duo of outstanding international wingers - Korea Republic's Nam Tae-hee and Tunisia's Youssef Msakni - providing a regular



goal threat for Lekhwiya, and constant headaches for their opponents.

Esteghlal Khouzeestan were the other club to progress to the knockout stage, thanks largely to successive 1-0 wins - over Al-Fateh, then Al-Jazira - in their opening two matches. The Iranian club were unable to register another win in their remaining four attempts, but a series of hard-fought draws proved enough to claim second place in the group.

Going into the final Matchday, Al-Fateh were just two points adrift of Esteghlal Khouzeestan but the Saudi club suffered the misfortune of facing a rampant Lekhwiya, who produced four first-half goals en route to a 4-1 victory.



GROUP C

A series of brilliant individual performances from 2016 AFC Player of the Year Omar Abdulrahman lit up Group C, and ensured Al-Ain of the United Arab Emirates, along with Saudi Arabia's Al-Ahli comfortably progressed to the Round of 16 at the expense of Zob Ahan and Bunyodkor.

Following the club's defeat in the 2016 AFC Champions League Final, the man known as 'Amoory' resumed his now customary role as Al-Ain's talisman, but did so with an added potency in front of goal, scoring five times in six matches, and hitting the scoresheet against all three group opponents as the Emirati club went undefeated.

While Abdulrahman was dominant for Al-Ain, the exploits of Al-Ahli's Syrian striker Omar Al-Somah were equally impressive, as the three-time Saudi Pro League top-scorer contributed four goals; with none more memorable than his second in the 2-2 draw away to Al-Ain.

With the match seemingly slipping away from Al-Ahli, who trailed 2-1 in the 89th minute, Al-Somah unleashed a superb twenty-yard left-footed volley to salvage a crucial point, and provide the 2017 group stage with one of its most memorable moments.

Group D

All four clubs were still in contention going into a classic final Matchday where two matches produced 13 goals as two of Asia's biggest clubs, Al-Hilal and Persepolis, reached the knockout stage at the expense of Qatar's Al-Rayyan and Al-Wahda of the UAE.

Al-Rayyan hosted Al-Hilal on Matchday Six, and, sitting just two points adrift of the two-time Asian champions, had their destiny in their own hands, while Islamic Republic of Iran's Persepolis



were expected to secure qualification against Al-Wahda, but would have been eliminated with a loss.

In a joyously manic second-half in Doha, Al-Rayyan recovered from a 1-0 half-time deficit to take a 2-1 lead, then fell behind again before equalising



through Sergio Garcia in the 83rd minute. Garcia's strike gave Al-Rayyan a chance of progressing, but Syria's Omar Khribin stabbed home the winner from a corner kick less than a minute later, to secure a spectacular 4-3 win for the Saudi club.

At the same time, in front of 43,000 fans in Tehran, similar drama was unfolding between Persepolis and Al-Wahda, who recovered from two early Persepolis goals to level the match at 2-2 in the 51st minute.

However, Persepolis' outstanding Iranian international forward Mehdi Taremi settled matters, scoring a brilliant hat-trick to wrap up a 4-2 win and secure a place in the knockout stage on a compelling night of Asian football drama.

GROUP STAGE - EAST

GROUP E

J1 League champions and 2016 FIFA Club World Cup runners-up Kashima Antlers won four of six matches, while Thailand's Muangthong United reached the AFC Champions League knockout stage for the first time in a highly entertaining Group E.

Kashima continued in the manner in which they finished their superb 2016 season, topping the group thanks to three home wins and a superb 4-0 away triumph against a highly competitive Ulsan Hyundai side.

Muangthong United, and their legion of talented Thai internationals, were the surprise packet of the group, and diminutive playmaker Chanathip Songkrasin emerged as a rising star of Asian football with a series of sparkling displays.

Like Kashima, Muangthong won all three of their home matches, with Spanish striker Xisco's 94th minute winner against the Japanese champions, and the subsequent

raucous celebrations, providing some of the enduring images of the 2017 edition of the competition.

In a group that highlighted the unpredictable and competitive nature of the competition, Kashima's other loss came at the hands of Australia's Brisbane Roar, who finished bottom of the group and suffered a 6-0 defeat at the hands of Ulsan Hyundai on Matchday Two.

GROUP F

A group featuring two former winners, and some of the biggest stars in Asian club football produced jaw-dropping results, world-class



entertainment, and a whopping 53 goals in 12 matches as Urawa Red Diamonds and Shanghai SIPG booked places in the Round of 16.

2007 AFC Champions League winners Urawa sounded an early warning with a 4-0 away win against 2014 champions Western Sydney Wanderers on the opening day, before producing a sensational five-goal first half against Korea Republic's FC Seoul on Matchday Two.

Elsewhere, Shanghai SIPG's Brazilian triumvirate of Elkeson, Hulk and record off-season signing Oscar were almost unstoppable, particularly in Shanghai, where Andre Villas Boas' men saw off all comers, and racked up twelve goals in just three matches.

In a group where scoreboard operators rarely enjoyed a moment's rest, and even the eliminated teams managed double-figure goal tallies, Urawa and Shanghai's progress was hardly in doubt, with the duo enjoying a nine-point gap on the chasing pack going into the final Matchday.





In an episode that sums up the goal-laden nature of the group, Shanghai SIPG's Wu Lei scored one of the fastest goals in AFC Champions League history when he rattled the Western Sydney Wanderers' net within twenty seconds, only to find his team trailing just five minutes later, as the Australians found instant replies en route to a 3-2 victory.

GROUP G

SC Eastern coach Chan Yuen-ting made football history on a global scale, while Kawasaki Frontale, Guangzhou Evergrande and Suwon Samsung Bluewings played out a gripping three-way battle for two knockout stage places.

Hong Kong Premier League champions SC Eastern only had to travel around 120 kilometres for their AFC Champions League group stage opener against Guangzhou Evergrande, but the trip represented a seismic milestone for women in football as their pioneering coach Chan Yuen-ting became the first woman to take a charge of a men's team in a continental competition.

Eastern were outclassed by their illustrious hosts on that occasion, and generally struggled to remain competitive, losing five of six matches as Group G's remaining three clubs



fought tooth and nail to advance to the round of 16.

It was a group where the margin between progress and elimination was small, and in six matches between Kawasaki, Guangzhou and Suwon, five ended in draws.

Ultimately it was Suwon Samsung Bluewings who would miss out, with a headed goal by Kawasaki Frontale defender Tatsuki Nara on Matchday Five meaning the Korean side were the only team other than Eastern to lose a match, and a 2-2 final day draw in Guangzhou eventually confirming their elimination by a solitary point.

GROUP H

China PR's Jiangsu Suning won five out of six matches to ease into the second round, while Korea Republic's Jeju United reached the AFC Champions League knockout stage for the first time in their history in a see-sawing Group H.

In a group where little else was settled until the very end, Jiangsu's miserly defence - coupled with a combined seven goals from Brazilian stars Ramires and Alex Teixeira - afforded them safe passage to the round of 16 with two matches to spare.

While Group H was plain sailing for the Chinese club, the remaining contenders - Jeju United, Gamba Osaka and Adelaide United - continued to take points from one another, leading to a final Matchday where the trio all stood a chance of advancing alongside Jiangsu.

Ultimately Jeju's 2-0 win over 2008 winners Gamba Osaka was enough to reach the final 16, but it was the Korean side's away form which laid the foundation, with seven of their ten points coming on the road, including one from a crucial 3-3 draw with Adelaide United, in which the two sides exchanged six goals in 35 second-half minutes before ultimately sharing the spoils.

ROUND OF 16 - WEST



2016 AFC Champions League finalists Al-Ain produced a performance for the ages to comfortably overturn a first-leg deficit against Islamic Republic of Iran's Esteghlal and book a place in the quarter-finals with a 6-2 aggregate win.

Having suffered a last-gasp 1-0 defeat in front of over 67,000 fans in the first leg in Tehran, Zoran Mamic's men took control of the tie through an early double by Brazilian forward Caio, before two goals to Omar Abdulrahman and another to Lee Myung-joo in the space of eleven second half minutes put the tie beyond doubt.

2014 AFC Player of the Year Nasser Al-Shamrani made it 6-0 on the night with 15 minutes remaining, before Kevah Rezaei added a late goal for Esteghlal - his sixth of the tournament - as the two-time Asian champions exited the competition.

While one Tehran giant was eliminated in the Round of 16, another reached Asia's final eight for the first time in

16 years, as Persepolis saw off Qatar's Lekhwiya in a hard-fought tie decided by a single goal.

Persepolis succeeded where Lekhwiya's group stage opponents had failed, keeping the potent Qatari side scoreless in a tense first leg in Tehran, before repeating the dose in the return fixture after taking the lead when Chico Flores turned the ball into his own net.

Less than 15 kilometres away, perennial AFC Champions League challengers Al-Hilal were in the process of seeing off Iran's 2015-16 league champions Esteghlal Khuzestan with a 4-2 aggregate win.

Appearing in the knockout stage for a remarkable ninth consecutive season, the 14-time Saudi champions produced successive 2-1 victories to comfortably advance from the tie, which was held on neutral ground in Oman and Qatar.

Al-Ahli ensured there would be two Saudi sides in the final eight, producing

a fine 3-1 away win in the second leg of their tie against their Emirati namesakes in Dubai.

Having been held to a 1-1 draw in the first leg at home, the Jeddah-based club took control of the return fixture with first-half goals to Saudi national team midfielder duo Taisir Al-Jassim and Housain Al-Mogahwi, before Iraqi international star Saad Abdul-Amir put the tie beyond doubt from the penalty spot. Ghanaian star Asamoah Gyan pulled one back for the 2015 runners-up, but the Saudis advanced 4-2 on aggregate.



ROUND OF 16 - EAST



Brazilian superstar Hulk scored at home and away to help Shanghai SIPG to a place in the quarter-finals for a second successive season, winning an all-Chinese clash with Jiangsu Suning 5-3 on aggregate.

Jiangsu took the lead through Roger Martinez less than ten minutes into the opening leg at Shanghai Stadium, but goals to Hulk and Uzbek national

team star Odil Ahmedov gave SIPG a 2-1 advantage going into the return fixture in Nanjing, where they silenced the 37,000 strong crowd with two first half goals en route to a 3-2 win.

Shanghai SIPG's domestic title rivals Guangzhou Evergrande also booked a place in the last eight, thanks largely to the contribution of Paulinho, who scored in both legs as Luiz Felipe Scolari's side advanced on the away goals rule after a 2-2 aggregate draw with Kashima Antlers.



In a showdown between the reigning champions of China and Japan, Paulinho delighted 40,000 fans when he finally gave his side the lead 75 minutes into a first-leg in which Guangzhou Evergrande created a host of clear goal scoring chances.

It appeared as though Guangzhou would be made to rue their wastefulness when Pedro Junior's rocket early in the second leg made it 1-1 on aggregate, but Paulinho popped up to score again and take the tie beyond the reach of Ishii Masatada's side, despite a late Mu Kanakazi goal.

Elsewhere, Ryota Moriwaki's 114th minute strike completed a superb

Urawa Red Diamonds comeback against Jeju United. Having secured a 2-0 first leg victory at home, the Koreans - who were competing in the knockout stage for the first time - saw their lead disappear within 35 minutes in the second leg in Saitama, before 2011 AFC Asian Cup winner Moriwaki was on hand to complete the turnaround late in extra time.

Kawasaki Frontale confirmed there would be two Japanese clubs in the quarter-finals as they ended Muangthong United's dream run, outclassing the Thai champions at home and away to register a comprehensive 7-2 aggregate victory.



QUARTER-FINALS



AL AIN vs AL HILAL

In an open and free-flowing first leg match at the Hazza Bin Zayed Stadium, the two teams created plenty of chances throughout and in the first-half both found the back of the net without reward, as Al Hilal striker Omar Khribin was denied by an offside flag, while Douglas suffered the same fate soon after.

Al Ain were forced to play the last 20 minutes with only 10 men after defender Mohanad Salem was shown a red card for his second bookable offence of the evening in the 68th minute.

In the second leg in Riyadh Al Hilal proved to be clinical taking a two-goal lead just before halftime courtesy of

two set piece routines. Al Ain were unable to recover from the setback and Brazilian star Carlos Eduardo completed his hat-trick to seal a 3-0 win for Al Hilal, sending them through to the semi-finals for the third time in four years.



PERSEPOLIS vs AL AHLI

A late equaliser by substitute Godwin Mensha saw Islamic Republic of Iran's Persepolis come from two goals down to draw 2-2 with Al Ahli in the first leg. In the return match in Abu Dhabi, Persepolis were off to a flyer as Ali Alipour outmuscled

his marker before applying a placed finish into the bottom corner to give his side the lead five minutes into the game. Persepolis suffered a blow when midfielder Kamal Kamyabinia received a straight red card in the 12th minute.

Al Ahli capitalised on their one-man advantage and grabbed an equaliser when winger Saleh Al Amri curled one in from the edge of the area but the Iranians refused to be denied and two late penalties sealed a 5-3 aggregate triumph.



GUANGZHOU EVERGRANDE FC vs SHANGHAI SIPG FC

Shanghai SIPG narrowly avoided becoming the victims of the biggest comeback win in AFC Champions League history in their last-eight clash against their Chinese rivals. SIPG held a 4-0 lead from the first leg but their lead was erased in the return game as Alan netted a first-half double before Ricardo Goulart struck twice in the

last seven minutes to make it 4-4 on aggregate. The visitors were reduced to 10 men in extra-time but they regained the lead through a Hulk free-kick with nine minutes left.

Wang Shenchao then became the second SIPG player to be dismissed and Goulart converted the resulting

spot kick to send the match to a penalty shootout. Goulart then hit the post with the first kick of the shootout and SIPG didn't allow their advantage to slip again as Hulk, Oscar, Wu Lei, Odil Akhmedov and Yu Hai all converted to send them through to the semi-finals for the first time.



URAWA RED DIAMONDS vs KAWASAKI FRONTALE

Urawa pulled off a remarkable comeback in their clash against Japanese rivals Kawasaki Frontale, who led 3-1 from the first leg and extended their advantage to 4-1 when Elsinho scored after 19 minutes in the return game. Shinzoh Kohrogi pulled

a goal back for the hosts in the 35th minute before Kawasaki's Shitaro Kuruyama was sent off three minutes later to turn the match in favour of the home side. Their pressure finally paid off when Zlatan Ljubijankic headed home in the 70th minute before goals

in the final six minutes by Rafael da Silva and Toshiyuki Takagi completed a dramatic 5-4 aggregate victory.

SEMI-FINALS



Al Hilal SFC (KSA) vs Persepolis FC (IRN)

6-2 on aggregate

A sensational five goals over two legs from forward Omar Khribin helped Al Hilal book their sixth appearance in the AFC Champions League Final, as Iran's Persepolis were swept aside 6-2 on aggregate.

A 4-0 first leg triumph laid the foundation for Al-Hilal's win, as Khribin helped himself to a memorable hat-trick in Abu Dhabi.

The Syrian star opened the scoring with a deft header after 31 minutes,

before Yasser Al-Shahrani doubled the advantage nine minutes later.

Al Hilal's Abdullah Otafy looked to have given Persepolis a lifeline when he was sent off early in the second half, but Khribin made it 3-0 from close range in 54th minute, before giving the Iranians a mountain to climb with a delightful late third.

Persepolis needed to overturn a four goal deficit in the second leg in Muscat, and they made a promising

start through Godwin Mensah's early header, but Khribin restored the four goal buffer from the penalty spot at the half hour mark.

Mensah pulled back another goal in the second half, before the unstoppable Khribin powered home his fifth goal of the tie with 14 minutes remaining to put an exclamation mark on an excellent Al Hilal victory.



Urawa Red Diamonds (JPN) vs Shanghai SIPG FC (CHN)

2-1 on aggregate

A goal from Brazilian forward Rafael Silva helped Urawa Red Diamonds return to the AFC Champions League final after a decade-long absence with a hard-fought 2-1 aggregate win over China's Shanghai SIPG FC.

The Andre Villas Boas-led Shanghai SIPG started the stronger, and it was their own Brazilian star, prolific striker Hulk, who thundered them into the lead from 25 metres just a quarter of an hour into the first leg in China

Urawa midfielder Yoshuke Kashiwagi picked the ideal time to score his first AFC Champions League goal in four

years, as he stole in to volley home a 27th minute equaliser as the first leg remained deadlocked at 1-1.

Cheered on by a boisterous 44,000-strong crowd in Saitama, where they had beaten their Chinese opponents 1-0 in the group stage in April, Urawa assumed pole position just 12 minutes into the second leg thanks to Rafael Silva's superb header. His third goal against Shanghai for the tournament, it proved to be the most important of his career to date, as it put the Japanese club in the continental final for the first time since they lifted the trophy in 2007.



FINAL

RED DIAMONDS TURN UP TRUMPS



The Saitama Stadium was dressed in its Saturday best. A sea of red flags. An exquisite black and white mosaic displaying the home club's symbol amid the red backdrop to one goal; at the other end, a sprinkling of blue-and-white clad Al Hilal supporters amid the red ocean. Pre-match pageantry involving drummers and ball-juggling warriors. A crowd of 57,727 to create warmth on an evening cool enough to persuade four of the visiting Saudi team to take the field wearing gloves. Expectations had been further fuelled by the outcome of the first leg played in Riyadh a week earlier. The initial mood of caginess had been shattered by the priceless away goal converted by Urawa's Brazilian midfielder Rafael Silva. Al Hilal had immediately switched to overt attacking mode, claiming a 68% share of possession; delivering 27 crosses; creating space for 20 goal attempts; and giving Urawa Red diamonds goalkeeper Nishikawa Shusaku a plethora of opportunities to showcase his qualities. Despite pushing the Japanese visitors on to the back foot, the only reward was an equaliser

by the competition's top scorer Omar Khrbin - his tenth goal of the campaign. Apart from the 1-1 scoreline, the major disappointment for Al Hilal head coach Ramón Díaz (the Argentine striker who ended his playing career in Japan) was the injury to free-scoring attacking midfielder Carlos Eduardo - sorely missed in Saitama.

All of which created an air of expectation as Uzbek referee Ravshan Irmatov signalled the start of play. The visitors had to score; the home team knew that keeping a clean sheet would earn the title. But Takafumi Hori was concerned that rapid transitions to a deep defensive block had exposed the Reds to wave after wave of attack in Riyadh. His response was to adjust his 1-4-1-4-1 structure into a more overt 1-4-4-2, deploying Aoki Takuya and the creative, left-footed playmaker Yosuke Kashiwagi in the central midfield positions. In the wide areas, Rafael Silva - an injury doubt during the week between the two matches - was less prominent than Muto Yuki on the right, while Kazuki Nagasawa roamed and

probed tirelessly in the wake of mobile striker Koroki Shinzoh.

Díaz remained faithful to his 1-4-2-3-1 formation in which Abdullah Otayf operated in the anchoring midfield role while the more adventurous Salman Al Faraj often had to cope with longer-distance backtracking runs during Al Hilal's attack-to-defence transitions.

But finals are also about nerves. With both teams pressing ball-carriers like ants around an intruder, the coaches alternated between applauding high ball-wins or bemoaning losses of possession in critical areas. An example earned Nagasawa a first-minute chance to put Urawa Red Diamonds ahead while, 19 minutes later, a similar opportunity was thwarted by Abdullah Al Mayoof in the Al Hilal goal. The guardians of the two nets, however, remained generally untested amid the pressing, tackling, intercepting and blocking which converted the game into a vertiginous succession of turnovers and prevented a coherent pattern of play from emerging.

If anything, Al Hilal seemed to have a slight edge in ability to construct combination moves. On the left, full-back Yasir Al Shahrani and midfielder Nawaf Alabid used their solo skills to thread their way through the Reds' pressure zone and launch promising incursions along the left flank and, with striker Omar Khrbin shackled by the home team's centre-backs, it was up to the three midfielders to capitalise on the space between the home team's two lines of four. Indeed, runs from deep by Salem Al Dawsari and Nicolás Milesi produced the best chances of the first half – the former shaving the crossbar with a long-range effort and the latter scuffing his shot wide after working his way into space on the right of the box to receive from the threatening left-wing area. Urawa, in the meantime, struggled to play their way into the final third. Attempts to combine ball-wins with direct passing into space behind the opposition's back four were, in general, comfortably dealt with. When the half-time whistle sounded, there had been plenty of frenzied movement on the field of play – but none on the scoreboard. And the menacing approach work by the visitors had punctuated the vigorous vocal, local support with intervals of uneasy silence.

The stalemate put the onus on Al Hilal to push forward after the break, giving the Reds glimpses of potential success on the counterattack – Kashiwagi twice breaking into shooting positions within the first quarter-hour. The visitors' search for the away goal, however, was hampered when target striker Khrbin, hurt by a challenge in the 13th minute, finally limped off in the 62nd. Struggling to penetrate the Reds' defence with combination play, Al Hilal generated greater anxiety among the home supporters with solo efforts – notably via the overlapping and underlapping runs by right-back Mohammed Alburayk which created scenes of panic in the Urawa defence. Although the visitors delivered more crosses, there was no end product: only one of 18 was successfully received by a team-mate.

Other data held a more distorted mirror to the proceedings. Al Hilal's 64% share of the ball and a tally of passes twice as high as the figures posted by Urawa, erroneously hinted at composed possession play which, in a match still marked by constant turnovers, was not a reality. As they had in Riyadh, the

Reds doubled their opponents' tally of interceptions and out-performed them in successful tackling and shot-blocking. Al Hilal's bids to compete, having earned six yellow cards in the first leg, sometimes translated into impetuosity which was to ultimately carry a price tag.

After 72 minutes, a counter launched by Nagasawa prompted Salem Al



Dawsari to bring down Kashiwagi. The immediate result was a well-delivered free-kick by the latter which obliged Al Mayoof to make point-blank saves from a header and a rebound. The more significant rebound, however, came six minutes later when another lunging tackle earned Al Dawsari a second yellow card as his team was winding up for a final onslaught. Ramón Díaz, having made two of his three substitutions, threw on the more attack-minded Mohammed Al Shalhoub for screening midfielder Otafy. Takafumi Hori withdrew striker Koroki; sent on Zlatan Ljubijankic to link middle-to-front play; and deployed Kashiwagi and Silva as a central attacking tandem.

The move paid dividends when the clock had ticked into the 88th minute. With Al Hilal pushing forward, Yuki Muto capitalised on another timely interception to send Silva clear. The Brazilian, whose strike rate of goals per minutes played had been an impressive feature of the competition, unleashed an unstoppable shot into the roof of the visitors' net to spark jubilation in the stands.

The jubilation was intensified by a massive release of tension. Curiously,

the dismissal of Al Dawsari had seemed to provoke anxiety in the Reds' ranks, as if haunted by the spectre, as the visitors threw everything at them, of defeat by ten-man opposition. Shunning the option of retaining possession, Urawa's response to gaining possession was generally to hit an upfield clearance that invited the visitors to come straight back with another wave of attack. In the stands, nerves were jangling so

intensely that last-ditch tackles and blocks were greeted with cheers of relief – even after the goal, when Al Hilal had two minutes of normal time plus four of added-time to hunt down an equaliser which would have sent the tie into extra-time.

The tension was not released until the final whistle provided the cue for delirium in the stadium. Celebrations gathered momentum when Yosuke Kashiwagi stepped up to receive the AFC Champions League MVP Award and continued in crescendo until Abe Yuki, also a starter when the Reds had won the title in 2007, stepped up to receive the trophy from AFC president Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa. The climb to the podium had been an arduous task against obdurate opposition and had required huge doses of resolve, commitment and emotional energy. As match-winner Rafael Silva remarked “the crowd's support allowed us to play on 100 per cent adrenaline”. In the Saitama Stadium, the crowd's support and the adrenalin-fuelled celebrations continued until well into the night.

FINAL 20





WINNING COACH



Glory days for Hori boys

One of the many charms of the game of football is that there is no such thing as a mission impossible. On the other hand, some missions appear to be less possible than others. On July 30th 2017, when Takafumi Hori was asked to take the helm of the Urawa Reds, the prospect of leading the club to AFC Champions League glory within a time-span of 118 days must have seemed closer to dream than to reality.

His inheritance was a team that had won three of its last dozen matches – losing eight of them – and languishing in the middle reaches of the J1 League. The club had not found it easy to part company with Mihailo Petrovic, whose team-building over a five-year period had consolidated the Reds among the elite. The appointment of Hori, a member of the club's coaching staff since his debut with the youth team in 2005 (including a brief five-game spell as interim first-team manager at the end of 2011), represented a vote for continuity, allied with the hope that he would be able to locate a 'Refresh' button adjacent to his competitive qualities as defensive midfielder or right full-back with the Reds. The club president told supporters that Hori's appointment was pegged to a desire that the team would 'continue to play aggressive soccer'.

However, there was no overnight success story. Just over three weeks into the Hori regime, his AFC Champions League debut away to Kawasaki Frontale ended in a comprehensive 3-1 defeat. And, when 0-1 behind early in the home leg, notions of lifting the trophy nudged the 'mission impossible' category. The first leg, however, had hardened Hori's resolve to pursue his personal beliefs and to switch from the 1-5-3-2 structure favoured by Petrovic to a 1-4-1-4-1 formation with a single screening midfielder and fast transitions to 1-4-3-3 attacking. At the same time, he gave opportunities to players from the second team, among them Kazuki Nagasawa, who emerged as a key component during the final phase of the competition.

A 4-1 comeback win over Kawasaki secured a semi-final place and bought time for further training-ground polishing of the Diamonds. Although the team was expected to adhere to an attacking philosophy, there was an evident need to work hard on the mechanisms of a defence where Hori looked to the experience and leadership qualities of former International centre-back Abe Yuki, a player who had won the AFC Champions League with the Reds in 2007 and whose



decade at the club had been punctuated by a spell in England with Leicester City. Hori, when asked before the final to name a candidate for the Player of the Tournament award, had no hesitation in naming his captain.

It illustrated his readiness to give credit where it was due. After lifting the trophy in Saitama, he paid tribute to "the supporters who gave their best and also to Petrovic, who built the foundations of the team. I learned a lot from him." At the same time, he acknowledged that he and his coaching staff had done their homework. "We were very prepared for our opponents," he commented, "after studying them a lot. After the first game, I had felt that our left flank had been very weak. Not an individual weakness but a team-performance weakness. So we worked on covering that area a little bit better and, playing before our own supporters, it was easier to attack with more conviction and to be more aggressive in our approach to the game." As he left the stadium he had reason to feel satisfied that, having taken control at a difficult juncture, within 118 days he needed to address the maybe unexpected challenge of preparing his team for the imminent FIFA World Club Cup in the UAE. Hori's outstanding achievement was recognised at the AFC Annual Awards in Bangkok four days later where he was named AFC Coach of the Year.



“ My thanks go out to the supporters who gave their best and also to Petrovic, who built the foundations of the team. I learned a lot from him. ”

- Takafumi Hori





TECHNICAL TOPICS





The closely-fought final between teams from the far East and the far West of AFC geography culminated in a sixth successive Eastern victory. The sequence inevitably raised a simple question: why? A thought-provoking argument, as it happened, had been put forward three months earlier at the AFC Elite Club Coaches' Forum in Shanghai: "teams from the East play with higher intensity than teams from the West". Coaches working in the West maintained that this is understandable. "It is difficult to sustain a high-intensity game," was the view, "bearing in mind the climatic conditions in so many countries." This factor was highlighted, to quote just one example, by the AFC technical observer at the quarter-final match between Persepolis FC and Al Ahli. "In the final quarter-hour," he reported, "it became obvious that the conditions were beginning to affect both teams. The temperature was 36° and it could be observed that the performance levels of both teams fell away."

But Fabio Capello took the issue a stage further when asked to calibrate the AFC Champions League against its European counterpart. "The pressure is much greater," he remarked. "A lot of

players would find it simply too fast and too difficult. Games demand speed of body and mind; a high degree of tactical awareness; and great concentration." Choi Kang-hee, the champion coach with Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors in 2016, was quick to point out that "the Asian Champions League has its own culture. It has strong characteristics of its own. So it's not always fair to compare. But I do admit that the European competition can be a useful reference point for us."

Intensifying intensity

The first challenge is to define 'intensity'. Dictionary mentions of 'energy, strength and concentration' tend to confirm that it is a mix of physical and mental factors. With regard to the former, pertinent input had been received during the AFC Fitness Course from Magni Mohr, member of a highly-respected team of football-orientated sports scientists at Copenhagen University. He reported that an in-depth study over a ten-season period in the English Premier League – widely regarded as a benchmark in terms of competitive characteristics – had confirmed that the game has become more intensive and more explosive. Match analysis had revealed significant increases: 12% in the number of passes; 35% in distances covered

at sprint speeds; 80% in the number of sprints; and 50% in the number of actions executed during the match.

His comments extend an invitation to reflect on how best to prepare players to cope, on a sustainable basis, with high-intensity speed-endurance issues. Interestingly, bearing in mind the 'climate factors', Mohr insists that hot conditions are the most conducive to training-ground work on speed, while endurance is better developed in cooler conditions.

End to end football

The AFC Champions League confirmed that the top teams had explosive counterattacking as a major weapon in their armouries. The 'counterattacking team' has become increasingly rare, but most coaches now embrace the importance of the fast break as an option rather than a philosophy. Shanghai SIPG underlined the value of direct play as an immediate response to ball-winning during the home leg of their quarter-final against Guangzhou Evergrande when, exploiting powerful forward running by Wu Lei and Hulk, three of their four goals could be attributed to fast counters, based on tactical opportunism – the immediate

awareness of attacking possibilities after turnovers.

The match also demonstrated that many of the top teams accept that having a lesser share of ball-possession is not always a cause for concern. That 4-0 home victory was secured with a 34% share of the ball. Indeed, one of the salient features of the 2017 AFC Champions League was that, in the 14 games played from quarter-finals to final, five of the nine matches which produced a victory were for teams who had less of the ball (compared with only two in the previous season). The final was one of the cases in point: Urawa Red Diamonds winning the return leg 1-0 thanks to a quick counter at the end of a match where the champions had 36% of possession (having drawn in Riyadh with 32%).

Significantly, Ravshan Irmatov, the referee of the return leg of the final, corroborated suggestions that more relevance is being given to direct attacking and counterattacking. "This has become one of the most difficult challenges for referees," he commented in Saitama. "Counterattacks and fast transitions are very demanding in terms of the referee's positioning."

"This is closely linked to fitness and intensity issues," added AFC technical director, Andy Roxburgh, "because the fast counter requires explosive effort and the potential for long sprints in

addition to the technical and tactical aspects." The latter stages of the competition revealed the amount of training-ground work currently being undertaken on the mechanisms of defence-to-attack transitions in terms of the ability to rapidly read situations and to successfully link the forward move by utilising the team's transition player(s).

To a certain extent, the concept of direct attacking can be linked to use of the long pass – or the less precise 'long ball'. Most of the top teams in the AFC Champions League were pretty much in line with the average of 13.4% posted in the European equivalent during the 2016/17 season. However, the champions' statistics reveal that 18% of their passing was long in the semi-final against Shanghai SIPG and 19% in the final. SIPG, during the quarter-final when they had only one-third of possession against Guangzhou Evergrande, responded with a long game: 22% during their 4-0 home win and 31% when losing the return match 5-1.

Eleven versus eleven

The 2017 season extended the trend away from rigid team structures. It was possible to categorise teams' default settings but, as Andy Roxburgh concluded, "it was risky to judge teams by their shape because there was usually a lot of room for interpretation in the area between starting positions and operational roles."

However, a numerical overview reveals that four of the top eight teams favoured a 1-4-2-3-1 structure – among them three of the four Eastern contenders. But grey areas abounded. Persepolis, for example, could be filed in the 1-4-4-2 drawer but the Iranian club's midfield line of four often featured a much deeper-lying screening player. Similar provisos applied to the 1-4-5-1 adopted by Al Ain and Al Ahli. Al Hilal switched to three at the back in their away fixture at Al Ain. Maybe the most significant structural modification corresponded to the champions, with Takafumi Hori preferring a four-man back line as opposed to the 5-3-2 structure favoured earlier in the competition by his predecessor Mihailo Petrovic.

Six of the top eight teams set up a 1-4-5-1 defensive block, with the back four adjacent to the edge of the penalty area. Shanghai SIPG and Kawasaki Frontale opted for a 1-4-4-2 structure in defence. The use of the goalkeeper as an initiator of attack-building gradually gathered momentum during the season – although the general tendency was for keepers, when receiving a back-pass, to make a clearance rather than a rational distribution of the ball to team-mates. Using the goalkeeper to initiate play from the back is also a facet which has barely been visible in AFC's age-limit competitions. In the final, both Urawa Red Diamonds and Al Hilal were unafraid to play the ball to Shusaku Nishikawa and Abdullah Al



Mayoof respectively – both of whom distributed confidently with their feet. They, along with Persepolis keeper Ali Reza, were given credit by AFC technical observers, not only for their shot-stopping abilities but also for their contribution to outfield play.

There was, however, greater diversity when it came to committing players forward when the team engaged attacking mode. Painting the picture with broad brush strokes, five of the quarter-finalists left two at the back; the other three kept a trio to guard the back door. Once again, there were nuances. On occasions, one of the centre-backs was given licence to break forward into midfield. More often, they played a more conservative role, with a screening midfielder staying deep to sweep the area in front of them. The most common denominator was for the outfielders to be distributed 2-1-3-1-3. Although teams were often willing to end their attacking move with four in the box, the general rule was for enough players to hang in balancing positions behind the ball with a view to disturbing opponents' counters.

Wingers an endangered species?

The general trend for centre-backs and a screening midfielder to hold the back line during attacking play implicitly signified that full-backs were expected to push forward. The palpable result was a lack of traditional wingers at the top teams. The trend towards mobile wide midfielders continued during the 2017 season and, written large in their job descriptions, was the emphasis on cutting-in from wide starting positions, with or without the ball. The responsibility for running the touchline and delivering crosses – hitherto the domain of the traditional winger – has now been handed to the full-back or wing-back.

The knockout rounds of the competition offered ample examples of wide midfielders conforming to the new operational role: Wu Lei and Hulk at Shanghai SIPG; Alan at Guangzhou Evergrande; Yu Kobayashi or Akihiro Ienaga at Kawasaki Frontale. With the emphasis on making infield runs into shooting positions, the trend towards change-footed wide players gathered

momentum. The inward diagonals converted the wide midfielders into a fertile source of goals. The right-footed Rafael Silva, starting in a wide-left position, was, by far, the top scorer for the champions. Hulk and Alan were also among the competition's top eight scorers.

The final provided further illustrations. For Al Hilal, while the support trio behind Omar Khribin focused on running into internal pockets between lines, the full-backs were expected to fulfil the wingers' duties. On the left, Yasir Al Shahrani's skills equipped him for touchline runs and crossing. On the right, the powerful runs by Mohammed Alburayk provided his team's greatest attacking threat during the second half, during which he not only overlapped along the touchline but also made diagonal surges into the opponents' box. The final underscored the importance of coaching the modern full-back in the arts of the winger: i.e. the 1 v 1 skills and the ability to deliver high-quality crosses and cut-backs.





Without sacrificing defensive qualities, of course. At the Coaches' Forum, Gus Poyet, a ball-winning midfielder with Real Zaragoza, Chelsea and Tottenham Hotspur currently coaching Shanghai Shenhua, provoked discussion by enquiring what has happened to the art of tackling. The question was given pertinence by the final, during which mistimed tackles earned Al Hilal eleven cautions and led to the untimely dismissal of Salem Al Dawsari in the return leg. The debating point is to what extent the art of tackling is coached at development levels.

The final also showcased dissimilar job descriptions for strikers. Al Hilal's Omar Khrbin operated in a target role – and the Syrian's efficacy in front of goal earned him the AFC Player of the Year award. Shinzoh Koroki (scorer of four goals compared with Khrbin's 10) led the Urawa Red Diamonds' attack in different fashion, making constant off-the-ball runs to open spaces for teammates, rather than offering himself as a more static target.

Skill and creativity

Even though his team was eliminated in the quarter-finals, Al Ain skipper Omar Abdulrahman's status as role model in Asian football remained intact. The notes by the AFC technical observer at the home leg against Al Hilal make a succinct description: "excellent technical abilities; creative playmaker; decision-maker; team leader". Although comparisons are thorny, the two Japanese representatives in the top eight could point to Kengo Nakamura at Kawasaki Frontale or Yosuke Kashiwagi as players with similar creative potential. However, playmaking roles gravitated towards the likes of Oscar at Shanghai SIPG or Carlos Eduardo at Al Hilal. The top clubs tended to entrust creative responsibilities to Latin or South American talent – sparking debate about the possible impact on national teams and the opportunities available to young Asian talents in terms of polishing their solo skills and developing their ability to generate combination moves and decisive passes.

Using the ball is one thing. Keeping it is another. In general, the top teams in the AFC Champions League exerted aggressive pressure on opposition ball-carriers after losses of possession. Bids to play the sort of high-intensity football mentioned earlier translate into greater demands on players' personal possession qualities. Matches were often punctuated by rapid turnovers while players struggled to play or pass their way out of tight spaces created by the opposition's pressing. Collective solutions were sometimes found by off-ball movement aimed at providing passing options. On the other hand, pressing based on cutting-off the short-passing possibilities obliges the ball-carrier to find solutions based on individual technique – a mix of screening ability and tight-space dribbling skills. In this department, the role model par excellence is current Al Sadd midfielder Xavi Hernández, whose capacity to twist, turn and dance his way out of trouble until he could spot a viable pass made him a key figure in the successes of FC Barcelona and Spain. As the game grows in intensity, these are skills that will inevitably need to be developed at youth levels.

The dead ball

Much the same could be said with regard to deliveries from dead-ball situations – a subject broached in the goalscoring analysis section of this report. The season registered a great diversity in manners of defending set plays – the feasibility of scouting future opponents is evidently a conditioning factor – while, at the same time, raising questions about the number of free-kick specialists in Asia capable of rivalling the dead-ball skills of Omar Abdulrahman. Al Ain's second goal in the 3-0 home victory over Uzbek visitors Bunyodkor provided a wonderful example of how to hit the net from a direct free-kick. Even the humble Omar had to admit "this was my best goal in the 2017 Champions League" and it was work of art designed by Omar's celebrated left foot. What can be done to encourage young players to emulate his expertise?

This was one of the many questions which could be taken from the peak of the AFC Champions League into the development levels of the Asian game.

KEY FEATURES

AL AHLI

- 1-4-3-3 with Claudemir linking play as single controlling midfielder
- Building from back; good off-ball movement, diagonals to wide areas
- Effective use of width; adventurous full-backs up at every opportunity
- Wingers cutting-in, going for goal – excellent 1 v 1 skills by Saleh on right
- Neat, quick combinations, middle-to-front positional interchanging
- High-quality crosses, long diagonal passes to switch play
- Well-organised 1-4-1-4-1 defence led by centre-back Hawsawi



AL AIN

- 1-4-1-4-1 or 1-3-4-1-2 with one or two screening midfielders
- Effective mix of short-passing combination play, direct supply to front
- Fast transitions to 1-4-5-1 defending or 1-5-4-1 if playing three centre-backs
- Aggressive pressing after ball-loss to pre-empt opposition counters
- Fluid positional interchanging in middle-to-front areas
- Omar the inspirational technically outstanding playmaker, team leader
- High levels of technique, tactical awareness, 1 v 1 abilities in attack and defence



AL HILAL

- 1-4-2-3-1 with Khrbin as mobile, efficient target striker and scorer
- Otayf screening; four midfielders pushing up to attack
- Eduardo the creative, linking, goalscoring catalyst on right midfield
- Composed construction from back; quick combinations, positional interchanges
- Full-backs overlapping, underlapping at every opportunity, supplying crosses
- Immediate fierce pressure on ball-carrier after loss of possession
- Strong technique in all departments; team ethic, winning mentality



GUANGZHOU EVERGRANDE

- 1-4-2-3-1; Xu Xin the more conservative of two screening midfielders
- Short-passing combination game mixed with direct counters
- 1-2-3-2-3 attacking with strong support for target striker Gao Lin
- 1-4-4-2 defending; two front players pressing to pre-empt counters
- Goulart the orchestrator; skill, deft passing, movement and goals
- Overlapping full-backs delivering quality crosses to aerial specialists
- High-tempo attacking; good athletic condition, mental strength



KAWASAKI FRONTALE

- Variations on 1-4-4-2 with rapid transitions to compact defensive block
- Mix of patient construction and direct collective counterattacking
- Excellent passing game; good options for player in possession
- Nakamura the playmaker off the front; vision, changes of pace; decisive passes
- Spells of high pressing; generally from midfield when block assembled
- Timely upfield running by full-backs, especially Elsinho on right
- Eduardo Neto the controlling midfielder; strength, skills linking attack and defence



PERSEPOLIS FC

- 1-4-4-2 with Rabikhah as deep-lying screening midfielder
- Extensive use of direct back-to-front passing by keeper, defenders
- Strikers alternating in dropping deep to receive; Godwin the reference
- Compact, organised, disciplined 1-4-5-1 deep defending
- Influential goalkeeper, sweeping at back when team pushes forward
- Immediate pressure on ball-carrier after loss of possession
- Tactically well-organised; good positional play, changes of tempo



SHANGHAI SIPG

- 1-4-2-3-1 with Huikang the anchor screening midfielder
- High-tempo combination game, playing through thirds
- Rapid transitions in both directions; compact 1-4-4-2 defending
- Oscar the creative free spirit in central middle-to-front role
- Solo skills in final third by Elkeson, Hulk; long-range shots by latter
- Akhmedov the key linking midfielder in transition play
- Excellent athletic qualities in all departments; strong team spirit



URAWA RED DIAMONDS

- 1-4-1-4-1 or 1-4-4-2 with quick transitions in both directions
- Koroki leading attack, constant movement to create spaces
- High-tempo build-up through thirds or long passes behind defence
- Kashiwagi the creative midfielder; vision, skill, dangerous set plays
- Well-drilled back four led by Abe; Nishikawa confidence-inspiring keeper
- Energetic high or midfield pressing; quick interceptions, shot-blocking
- Positional fluidity in final third; strong team ethic, athletic condition







GOALSCORING ANALYSIS



The Final Score

If it is true that goals talk, the 2017 AFC Champions League was in fine voice. The salient feature of the season was a startling 27.5% increase in the number of goals scored. The final balance was a total of 394 goals at an average of 3.13 per match. This compared with 309 at 2.47 in the previous season and 334 at 2.65 in 2015. The upsurge, after the 7.5% downturn in 2016, represented a positive development in terms of offering entertainment value to the public and allowed the AFC competition to keep pace with its European counterpart, whose 2016/17 season had registered an all-time record of 3.04 goals per game.

One factor in the equation, nevertheless, remained unchanged. Even if goals talked more loudly in 2017, they continued to do so with Brazilian accents. Five of the eight players who topped the scoring charts with more than half a dozen goals hailed from the South American country, even though an Asian player – Syria's Omar Khrbin – took the top scorer award by reaching double figures. Behind him, Hulk contributed nine goals and seven assists to the Shanghai SIPG campaign, while his fellow Brazilian Rafael Silva registered an impressive strike rate by scoring the same number in a limited total of minutes on the field of play. Four of his nine were scored when he came off the bench as substitute and, of course, he netted the brace which earned Urawa Red Diamonds their 2-1 aggregate win over Al Hilal in the final.

As opposed to the previous season, the knockout rounds yielded fewer goals per game (2.77) than the group stage, even though the eight quarter-final matches generated 30 goals at 3.75 – largely due to the all-China clash between Shanghai SIPG and Guangzhou Evergrande which produced ten. The latter's 5-1 home win after extra-time was among the most prolific games of the competition – the other notable scorelines being Guangzhou's 7-0 and 6-0 wins against Eastern HC of Hong Kong; Al Ain's 6-1 home win against Esteghlal FC or the 6-1 home victory for Urawa Red Diamonds against Western Sydney Wanderers. The eventual champions posted the highest tally of the group stage by hitting 18 of the 53 goals scored in Group F, where their fellow travellers were Shanghai SIPG, FC Seoul and Sydney. One of the statistical curiosities of that phase of the competition was that UAE side Al Wahda were the top scorers with 12 in Group D, yet finished at the foot of it.

Overall, Urawa Red Diamonds were the highest-scoring team with 30. The champions' average of 2.14 per game was surpassed only by Shanghai SIPG (2.17). The two Eastern clubs were alone in exceeding two goals per game during the campaign – and their goalscoring potential ushered them into the top four.

Statistics provided food for thought. The attacking players might reflect on the fact that only 36% of the competition's goal attempts were on target. Looking at the other side of the coin, the goalkeeping fraternity might not be overjoyed to read that one of every 2.89 on-target efforts ended in the net. Expressed in a different way, 35% of on-target attempts were goals. On the other hand, keepers could look back with a degree of satisfaction on a total of 65 clean sheets.

The goalscoring charts logs the technical and tactical actions which led to the ball being picked out of the net 394 times during the 2017 AFC Champions League.

Open Play

Numerically, the massive increase of 85 goals compared with the previous season was unequally shared between open-play and set-play goals. No fewer than 70 of the 85 were scored in open play – a fact which helped to push the open-play percentage up from 70% to 72% and to bring it within touching distance of the 73% posted in 2015. Even so, this left a shortfall against the 76% registered during the 2016/17 UEFA Champions League.

The numerical increase led to inflated figures right across the board. Well, almost. The most striking trend in 2017 was, despite the widespread increases, the 33% decline in the number of goals resulting from combination play. The fall from 39 to 26 represented a return to 2015 values – in that season only 24 goals stemmed from combination moves. It meant that this facet of the game accounted for barely 9.2% of the open-play goals. In the European competition, the 2016/17 season had signalled a marked trend towards more direct attacking yet, even so, combination moves had signified 14.5% of the open-play goals. In the AFC Champions League, penetration via quick passing moves proved to be problematical. The champions, however, scored six of their goals (20%) from combination play. And there were outstanding, if isolated,

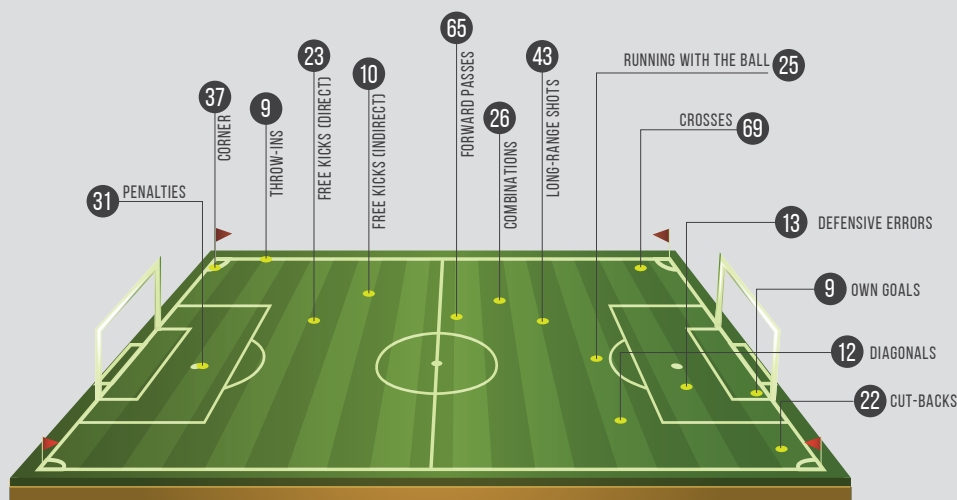
examples of successful combos: for example, the only goal of Jiangsu Suning's away game at Gamba Osaka on the third matchday, when Ramires – another Brazilian accent – put the finishing touch to a sparkling combination move with a long-range finish.

Shots from distance, in fact, produced the most striking increase. The total of 43 represented 23 more than in the previous season. In other words, the success rate was more than doubled. Shanghai SIPG's total of six long-range goals was sparked by the striking power of Hulk. Four of his rockets found their way into the season's ten best goals, with his spectacular effort in the home leg against Urawa Red Diamonds topping the chart. He also hit the No. 2 spot in the set-play category with his extra-time free-kick during the second leg against Guangzhou Evergrande. Jeju United also made their mark with five goals scored from long range.

Goals from distance provided the third most fertile source during a season when crosses were, once again, the most productive category. Just under a quarter of the competition's open-play goals were derived from supplies from the wide areas, with Guangzhou Evergrande, Kawasaki Frontale and Al Hilal notably proficient in converting wing-play into successful finishing.

However, the number of goals stemming from forward passes was only marginally behind, accounting for 23% of the season's open-play successes and suggesting that direct attacking through the central area could be as effective as penetration via the wide areas. The champions, exploiting the pace and mobility of their middle-to-front players, owed 12 of their goals to through passes, among them the quick delivery by Yuki Muto which allowed Rafael Silva to run clear and beat the Al Hilal keeper in the 88th minute of the return leg of the final and give Urawa Red Diamonds their 2-1 aggregate victory.

During the 2016 season, one of the eyebrow-raising features had been a drop of almost 30% in the number of goals generated by solo runs. In 2017 the balance was redressed, with the number of goals attributable to individual running with the ball being



GOALS FROM SET PLAY

ACTION	GUIDELINES	GOALS
Corners	Direct from / following a corner	37
Free kicks (direct)	Direct from a free kick	10
Free kicks (indirect)	Following a free kick	23
Penalties	Spot kick (or follow-up from a penalty)	31
Throw-ins	Following a throw-in	9

GOALS FROM OPEN PLAY

ACTION	GUIDELINES	GOALS
Combinations	Wall pass / combination move	26
Crosses	Cross from the wing	69
Cut-backs	Pass back from the bye-line	22
Diagonals	Diagonal pass into the penalty box	12
Running with the ball	Dribble and close-range shot / dribble and pass	25
Long-range shots	Direct shot / shot and rebound	43
Forward passes	Through pass or pass over the defence	65
Defensive Errors	Bad back-pass / mistake by the goalkeeper	13
Own Goals	Goal by the opponent	9

TOTAL GOALS SCORED : 394

doubled. Al Ain were among the major beneficiaries, with two magnificent solo runs by skipper Omar Abdulrahman high on the list of the season's top ten open-play goals. Other outstanding examples were the moments of individual brilliance by Al Hilal's Syrian striker Omar Khrbin in the semi-final against Persepolis; and Abdulmajeed Al Sawat's early goal for Al Taawoun against Lokomotiv Tashkent.

The 52 goals directly attributable to counterattacking signified 18% of the season's open-play goals. This was in line with European parameters: in the 2016/17 UEFA Champions League counterattacking had accounted for a few decimal points below 20%. In the AFC competition, the successful counters could be broken down into four categories. Exactly half of the total could be described as collective counterattacks following ball-winning in midfield with players flooding forward before opponents could re-assemble a defensive block. A prime example was the fast break culminated by Wu Lei - launched by Elkeson - to put Shanghai three ahead during the 4-0 quarter-final win against Guangzhou Evergrande. Just over one-fifth of the successful counters were of the classic variety - a rapid back-to-front response. A classic

example of the classic variety came in Group H where, on the final matchday, Jeju United not only efficiently defended a corner by Gamba Osaka but also replied with a counterpunch delivered by Hwang Il-Su to put the Korea Republic team 2-0 ahead. Swift counters from advanced positions - mostly derived from high pressing - produced nine goals, while six others were down to solo counterattacking runs.

Set Plays

The success rate from dead-ball situations stabilised at 28% of all goals - down from 31% in 2016 to a figure adjacent to the 27% registered in 2015. The percentage, however, is still high in relation to the 24% posted in the equivalent European competition. During the AFC campaign, 31 of the set play goals (28%) were penalties - significantly lower than in 2016 when 36% of the set-play goals had been from the penalty spot and had taken over pole position from corner-kicks in the list of dead-ball successes. During 2017, corners regained their former supremacy, with Urawa Red Diamonds setting the pace by scoring four of the overall total of 37. Three goals from corners were sufficiently

striking to earn places - albeit lower ones - among the season's top ten set-play goals: the ones by Ismail Ahmed for Al Ain against Zob Ahan; Johnathan's for Suwon Bluewings against Guangzhou Evergrande; and Aqeel Balghaith's for Al Ahli against Al Ain. In general terms, the corner kick produced decent dividends for time invested on the training ground. The success ratio was one goal per 33 corners - a more encouraging statistic than the 1:52 success rate registered in the UEFA Champions League. It could be argued that the European game - and geography - offers greater opportunities for the scouting of opponents' dead-ball strategies.

On the other hand, goals scored directly from free-kicks were few and far between. The final balance was 10 in 126 games. In general, it took a spectacular strike to beat defensive walls and goalkeepers - and seven of them were sufficiently stunning to appear in the list of the best set-play goals. Two of them were struck by the cultured left foot of Al Ain skipper Omar Abdulrahman, a role model for the free-kick specialists who, as discussed elsewhere in this report, seem to be an endangered species.





TALKING POINTS



The East-West divide?

Victory for Urawa Red Diamonds in 2017 meant that 11 of the last 12 finals have been won by a club from the East – the lone exception being the Al-Sadd penalty shoot-out win that took the trophy to Qatar in 2011. This quasi-monopoly immediately raises an obvious talking point: in an era when efforts by western teams have gone so largely unrewarded, is there a case for giving greater recognition? Should there be further debate on having a title-winner in both East and West? Would it be an idea for the two champions to then meet in a sort of Super Cup?

In playing terms, various explanations for the lopsided list of title-winners have been offered. But, at the recent AFC Elite Club Coaches Forum in Shanghai, Alireza Mansouri, head coach of Iranian club Esteghlal FC, acted as spokesman for the view that ‘western’ teams are hampered by lack of first-hand experience against ‘eastern’ opposition. “There should be greater levels of exchange between East and West,” he said, “so that teams and coaches can learn from each other and push each other to get better.” In other words, there should be an East-West connection rather than an East-West divide.

Is this a valid standpoint? If so, what could be done to promote more encounters between the two zones? Would it be a good idea to merge East and West after the group stage of the AFC Champions League? Or, as a first step, from the quarter-final stage? Would this, in the short term, run the risk of underlining Eastern supremacy? Or, in the slightly longer term, would increased levels of contact help to make the AFC Champions League even more competitive?



Keeping up with the times?

“For the coach, a long-term project is, nowadays, unusual.” The comment by one of the participants at the recent AFC Elite Club Coaches Forum raises a number of interlocking talking points. In many areas of planet football, the average tenure for a coaching job is down to around one season. That might raise eyebrows in some quarters – but not in others. For example, Andre Villas-Boas (who, shortly after parting company with Shanghai SIPG headed for South America to drive a car in the Dakar Rally) is a firm advocate of the one-year contract on the basis that it gives the coach greater control of his own destiny. That approach, it has to be said, entails a degree of confidence



in the coach’s prospects of finding alternative employment.

Nor did it go unnoticed that champion coach Takafumi Hori, when he lifted

the trophy in Saitama, had been in charge for just under four months. In this case, however, there are shades of meaning to be drawn. He had, after all, been a long-time member of the Urawa Red Diamonds’ coaching team and had made the short step up from assistant to head coach. But he did provide another item of evidence to support the general acceptance among the participants at the Forum that “the coach’s image, the relationship with the club management and, of course, results are major influences on job tenure”. To spark debate, it might be asked whether it is now outmoded to regard longer-term team-building as an important part of the job?

Easy to become old?

The question in the previous paragraph opens a short pathway along memory lane to the recent AFC Fitness Course, where Magni Mohr, a Danish sports scientist and coach who has worked with the likes of Juventus, Chelsea and the Danish national team, made the striking comment “it is very easy to become old in football”. The remark, inspired by the rapid evolution of the game over the last decade or so, raises questions about what coaches need to do in order to keep pace. For the coaches working in the front line, how easy is it to dedicate time to the sort of constant personal improvement encapsulated by the Japanese concept of ‘kaizen’ and commonly referred to in the business world as Continuing Professional Development?



The next debating point is what can be done to promote CPD among coaches in Asia? In some countries, national associations offer CPD to coaches who find themselves with time on their hands while between jobs. Is this a good idea? Would it be an equally good idea to arrange funding or sponsorship with the aim of allowing coaches to conduct study visits to clubs such as Manchester City, Real Madrid or Bayern München to make contact with top coaches and take a close-range look at how they approach the job? At the Coaches Forum, Dragan Stojkovic commented “it doesn’t make sense to

continually compare Asia with Europe because in Asia there’s a very special environment. But it’s nevertheless useful to use European football as a reference point.”

As for AFC, would it be helpful to organise more events along the lines of the Elite Club Coaches Forum, where technicians involved in the AFC Champions League find it valuable to meet colleagues in a non-competitive environment (as opposed to hurried handshake on the touchline) and to interchange experiences and knowledge?

The objective of amplifying opportunities for CPD is to encourage coaches to keep abreast – or ahead – of the game and, by undertaking the job in the most professional and modern manner possible, enhance the prospects of job security. Coaches’ associations, such as the one recently established in Japan, can do a great deal to offer support – and it would be rational to predict that other countries will follow suit. But what more can be done to protect coaches from instability and to enhance the image and status of the coaching profession?





TEAM PROFILES



Group A

Al Ahli FC (UAE)

(now part of merged club 'Shabab Al-Ahli Dubai FC')



SHIRT NO.	POSITION	NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	NATIONALITY
1	GK	AHMED MUBARAK	01-01-1986	UAE
33	GK	SAIF YOUSEF	10-01-1989	UAE
55	GK	MAJED NASER	01-04-1984	UAE
91	GK	MAYED MUHSIN	19-08-1996	UAE
2	DF	SALMIN KHAMIS	09-10-1991	UAE
5	DF	WALID ABBAS	11-06-1985	UAE
19	DF	ADEL AL HAMMADI	07-12-1991	UAE
24	DF	MOHAMED JABER	28-01-1989	UAE
26	DF	ABDULAZIZ HAIKAL	10-09-1990	UAE
28	DF	EISA AHMED	13-01-1987	UAE
42	DF	FAISAL YOUSUF SAQER	07-01-1996	UAE
57	DF	MOHAMED SEBIL	13-04-1993	UAE
62	DF	ABDELAZIZ SANQOUR	07-05-1989	UAE
4	MF	HABIB AL FARDAN	11-11-1990	UAE
7	MF	ISMAIL AL HAMMADI	01-07-1988	UAE
10	MF	EVERTON RIBEIRO	10-04-1989	BRA
13	MF	KHAMIS ESMAEEL	16-08-1989	UAE
17	MF	WALEED AMBAR	11-01-1993	UAE
70	MF	WALEED HUSAIN	15-05-1992	UAE
82	MF	SUHAIL AL ZADJALI	25-08-1996	UAE
88	MF	MAJED HASSAN	01-08-1992	UAE
97	MF	AHMED MOOSA	23-06-1995	UAE
3	FW	ASAMOAH GYAN	22-11-1985	GHA
11	FW	AHMED KHALIL	08-06-1991	UAE
20	FW	SAEED AL BLOUSHI	17-01-1994	UAE
92	FW	SAEED JASSIM	02-03-1995	UAE
99	FW	MAKHETE DIOP	08-07-1987	SEN



Club Profile

After failing to qualify for the AFC Champions League last year, Al Ahli FC secured their return to the continental tournament in style by winning the UAE Pro League title in the 2015-16 season, finishing nine points clear of runners-up Al Ain.

The Dubai club failed to get past the group stage in their first five appearances in the AFC Champions League but went all the way to the final in 2015, narrowly losing 1-0 on aggregate to China's Guangzhou Evergrande.



Head Coach

Cosmin Olariu

A former defender who ended his playing career with spells at Korea Republic's Suwon Samsung Bluewings and Japan's JEF United, Cosmin Olariu went into coaching in his native Romania before finding much success in the Middle East over the past decade. He joined Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal in 2007 and led them to Saudi League and the Saudi Crown Prince Cup title before joining Al Sadd and winning the Qatar Stars Cup in 2010. The 47-year-old then won back-to-back UAE league titles with Al Ain in 2012 and 2013 before moving to their rivals Al Ahli where he won two more league championships and led them to the 2015 AFC Champions League final.

Group A

Esteghlal FC (IRN)



SHIRT NO.	POSITION	NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	NATIONALITY
1	GK	MAHDI RAHMATI	03-02-1983	IRN
19	GK	ARSHIA AGHABABAZADEH	05-11-1995	IRN
22	GK	SEYED HOSSEIN HOSSEINI	30-06-1992	IRN
3	DF	ROBSON JANUARIO	14-02-1994	BRA
8	DF	YAGHOUB KARIMI	31-08-1991	IRN
15	DF	HRAYR MKOYAN	02-09-1986	ARM
18	DF	MILAD ZAKIPOURKINJI	29-04-1995	IRN
21	DF	VORYA GHAFOURI	20-09-1987	IRN
24	DF	OMID NORAKFAN	09-04-1997	IRN
30	DF	AZIM GOOG	25-01-1996	IRN
33	DF	MAJID HOSSEINI	20-06-1996	IRN
90	DF	LEANDRO PADOVANI	21-12-1993	BRA
2	MF	KHOSRO HEIDARI	14-09-1983	IRN
6	MF	OMID EBRAHAMI	16-09-1987	IRN
13	MF	MIAD YAZDANI BEJARSARI	26-08-1992	IRN
14	MF	FARSHID BAGHERI	05-06-1992	IRN
28	MF	MOHSEN KARIMI	20-09-1994	IRN
74	MF	MOJTABA HAGHDOOST	22-01-1996	IRN
77	MF	BEHNAM BARZAY	11-02-1993	IRN
88	MF	FARSHID ESMAEILI	23-02-1994	IRN
99	MF	ALIREZA SAYYAR	06-03-1994	IRN
9	FW	KAVEH REZAEI	05-04-1992	IRN
11	FW	JABER ANSARI	10-01-1987	IRN
17	FW	ALI GHORBANI	18-09-1990	IRN



Club Profile

Esteghlal FC missed out on silverware last season after finishing third in Iran's domestic league and losing on penalties to Zobahan FC in the Hazfi Cup final. However, they qualified for the AFC Champions League playoffs and secured their place in Group A by beating Qatari side Al Sadd FC in a penalty shootout following a 0-0 draw.

The Tehran club won the Asian Club Championship in 1970 and 1991 and have made seven previous appearances in the AFC Champions League with their best performance coming in 2013 when they reached the semi-finals.



Head Coach

Alireza Mansourian

(replaced in October, after Esteghlal were eliminated)

A former Iran international midfielder, Alireza Mansourian was in the Team Melli side that finished third in the 1996 AFC Asian Cup and appeared in the 1998 FIFA World Cup. After retiring with Esteghlal in 2008, he started coaching their youth teams before taking charge of Pas Hamedan for a short spell. He went on to work as an assistant coach with the national team and managed Iran's U23 national team for three years before he became head coach of Naft Tehran in 2014, leading them to third place in the league and the quarter-finals of the AFC Champions League. The 45-year-old returned to Esteghlal as their head coach last June.

Group A

Al Taawoun FC (KSA)



SHIRT NO.	POSITION	NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	NATIONALITY
1	GK	YAZEED AL SAYYAH	21-10-1995	KSA
21	GK	MUATAZ AL BAGAWI	04-01-1998	KSA
22	GK	FAHAD AL SHAMMARI	05-05-1981	KSA
23	GK	SULTAN AL GHAMDI	20-03-1992	KSA
32	GK	FAIZ AL SUBAIEI	09-10-1982	KSA
3	DF	ABDULLAH KANO	27-01-1990	KSA
4	DF	RICARDO MACHADO	13-09-1988	POR
5	DF	TALAL AL ABSI	22-02-1993	KSA
13	DF	IBRAHIM AL ZUBAIDI	04-10-1989	KSA
17	DF	MAHMOOD MOAAZ	26-10-1984	KSA
28	DF	ABDULLAH AL SHAMMARI	17-09-1993	KSA
70	DF	MOHAMMED AL SAIARI	02-05-1993	KSA
6	MF	ABDULRAHMAN AL BARAKAH	21-09-1990	KSA
10	MF	JEHAD AL HUSSEIN	30-07-1982	SYR
14	MF	MOHAMMED ABU SABAAN	20-01-1990	KSA
16	MF	NAIF MOUSA	21-11-1986	KSA
18	MF	MADALLAH AL OLAYAN	25-08-1994	KSA
27	MF	SAEED AL DOSARI	15-07-1990	KSA
29	MF	LUCIAN SANMARTEAN	13-03-1980	ROU
37	MF	ABDULAZIZ AL SHARID	05-01-1994	KSA
49	MF	AHMED AL ZAIN	02-07-1991	KSA
80	MF	ABDULMAJEED AL SUWAIT	21-04-1995	KSA
7	FW	MOUSA AL SHAMMARI	28-04-1986	KSA
11	FW	SAQER OTAYF	03-09-1990	KSA
19	FW	ALASSANE N'DIAYE	14-06-1991	FRA



Club Profile

Based in the central Saudi city of Buraidah, Al Taawoun were formed in 1956 but have spent much of their history in the lower divisions. However, they have made steady progress since winning promotion to the top flight for a second time in 2010 and secured their highest-ever league placing last season when they finished fourth.

It earned them a place in the AFC Champions League playoffs but with third-placed Al Ittihad failing to meet the AFC Club Licensing Criteria, they were instead given a slot in the group stage.



Head Coach

Jose Gomes

Following the dismissal of Romanian coach Constantin Galca in March, Al Taawoun re-appointed Portuguese tactician Jose Gomes for his second spell in charge of the Buraidah club. The 46-year-old began his coaching career in his early 20s and after spells at several clubs in his native Portugal, Spain, Greece and Hungary, he was appointed by Al Taawoun in 2014 and led them to fourth place in the Saudi League in the 2015-16 season, their highest-ever league finish. He left the club last summer but has returned after short, ill-fated stints at Saudi rivals Al Ahli and UAE side Baniyas.

Group A

PFC Lokomotiv (UZB)



SHIRT NO.	POSITION	NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	NATIONALITY
1	GK	IGNATIY NESTEROV	20-06-1983	UZB
12	GK	MAMUR IKRAMOV	12-06-1982	UZB
96	GK	RUSTAM NARTADJIEV	11-05-1996	UZB
4	DF	BOBURBEK YULDASHOV	08-04-1993	UZB
17	DF	SALIM MUSTAFAEV	07-03-1991	UZB
20	DF	ISLOM TUKHTAKHUJAEV	30-10-1989	UZB
28	DF	SHUKHRAT MUKHAMMADIEV	24-06-1989	UZB
29	DF	KUVONDIK RUZIEV	06-10-1994	UZB
37	DF	SHERZOD FAYZIYEV	06-02-1992	UZB
42	DF	MOHAMED GNONTCHA KONE	12-12-1993	CIV
44	DF	SERGEY PROKHOROV	16-10-1996	UZB
69	DF	VOKHIDJON YUNUSOV	31-12-1998	UZB
72	DF	SHOKHRUKH MUMINKULOV	14-08-1998	UZB
80	DF	FARRUKHJON IBROKHIMOV	30-10-1997	UZB
97	DF	RUSTAM KHAMRAEV	24-06-1998	UZB
5	MF	KAKHI MAKHARADZE	20-10-1987	GEO
8	MF	SALAMAT KUTIBAEV	21-05-1986	UZB
9	MF	IKROMJON ALIBAEV	09-01-1994	UZB
11	MF	SADRIDDIN ABDULLAEV	11-06-1986	UZB
15	MF	SARDOR MIRZAYEV	21-03-1991	UZB
18	MF	TIMUR KAPADZE	05-09-1981	UZB
33	MF	OLEG ZOTEEV	05-07-1989	UZB
77	MF	DIYORJON TURAPOV	09-07-1994	UZB
78	MF	AZIZBEK AMONOV	15-05-1996	UZB
81	MF	BEK ABULLAEV	11-08-1999	UZB
99	MF	JALOLIDDIN MASHARIPOV	01-09-1993	UZB
7	FW	GNOHERE KRIZO	20-06-1997	CIV
10	FW	MARAT BIKMAEV	01-01-1986	UZB
21	FW	TIMUR USMANOV	08-01-1995	UZB
22	FW	BOBOJONOV MURODBEK	16-07-1994	UZB



Club Profile

After missing out on the Uzbek League title by just a single point in 2015, PFC Lokomotiv made no mistake last year as they romped to their first-ever league championship, finishing 11 points ahead of closest rivals Bunyodkor and Nasaf. They completed the double with a 1-0 win over Nasaf in the Uzbek Cup final.

The Tashkent club also went past the group stage of the AFC Champions League for the first time before going out 1-0 on aggregate to Al Ain in the quarter-finals.



Head Coach

Andrey Miklyaev

A former Uzbekistan international defender, Andrey Miklyaev retired as a player in 2001 and worked for Uzbek clubs NBU-Asia, Qizilqum, Almalyk and Lokomotiv, where he became an assistant coach under Vadim Abramov in 2014. The 49-year-old was elevated to the head coaching position at the start of the 2016 season and he duly led Lokomotiv to their first-ever Uzbek league title and the quarter-finals of the AFC Champions League.

Group B

Al Jazira (UAE)



SHIRT NO.	POSITION	NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	NATIONALITY
1	GK	ALI KHASEIF	09-06-1987	UAE
36	GK	KHALED AL SENANI	04-10-1989	UAE
56	GK	ABDULRAHMAN ABDULLA	30-04-1998	UAE
93	GK	MOHAMED AL NAQBI	03-03-1993	UAE
2	DF	MOHAMED FAWZI	22-02-1990	UAE
5	DF	MUSALLEM FAYEZ	26-03-1987	UAE
6	DF	SAIF KHALFAN	31-01-1993	UAE
14	DF	EISSA AL OTAIBI	11-05-1998	UAE
18	DF	ABDULLA MOUSA	23-02-1987	UAE
22	DF	SAEED AL ROWAHI	01-02-1994	UAE
27	DF	SALEM ABDULLA	05-07-1986	UAE
30	DF	JOAO CARLOS	01-01-1982	BEL
40	DF	MOHAMED AL ATTAS	05-08-1997	UAE
42	DF	BADER AL SHABEEBI	28-10-1996	UAE
44	DF	FARES JUMA	30-12-1988	UAE
8	MF	PARK JONG-WOO	10-03-1989	KOR
10	MF	MBARK BOUSSOUFA	15-08-1984	NED
12	MF	SALIM RASHID OBAID	21-12-1993	UAE
21	MF	YAQOUB YOUSIF	01-06-1987	UAE
28	MF	HUMAIID AL HAMMADI	07-02-1988	UAE
50	MF	MOHAMED JAMAL	11-05-1994	UAE
77	MF	SULTAN BARGHASH	18-01-1989	UAE
7	FW	ALI MABKHOUT	05-10-1990	UAE
9	FW	AILTON	20-08-1984	BRA
11	FW	AHMED RABIA	14-08-1995	UAE
13	FW	SULTAN SAEED	22-06-1996	UAE
15	FW	KHALFAN AL REZZI	09-05-1995	UAE
24	FW	HAMAD AL JNEIBI	20-05-1996	UAE
29	FW	ZAYED AL AMERI	14-01-1997	UAE
70	FW	AHMED AL HASHMI	28-09-1995	UAE



Club Profile

Despite finishing seventh in the UAE Pro League in 2015-16, their worst domestic finish since 1998, Al Jazira earned a spot in the AFC Champions League for the ninth consecutive year after beating Al Ain on penalties to lift the President's Cup for the third time.

The Abu Dhabi club reached the last 16 of the continental tournament in 2012 and 2014 but went out in the group stage last year after picking up only a single point from six games.



Head Coach

Henk ten Cate

After retiring as a player at the age of 31, Dutchman Henk ten Cate began his coaching career with his former club Go Ahead Eagles. He managed several clubs in the Netherlands including Vitesse Arnhem and Ajax and also served as an assistant at European giants Barcelona and Chelsea before a stint in Asia from 2010 to 2013 with UAE side Al Ahli, Qatar's Umm Salal and China's Shandong Luneng. The 62-year-old returned to the Netherlands to coach Sparta Rotterdam on an interim basis in 2013 before joining Al Jazira in 2016.

Group B

Al Fateh SC (KSA)



SHIRT NO.	POSITION	NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	NATIONALITY
1	GK	HABIB AL WATYAN	08-08-1996	KSA
12	GK	ALI AL MAZYADI	24-09-1985	KSA
22	GK	ABDULLAH AL OWAYSHIR	13-05-1991	KSA
35	GK	BASIL MOHAMMED	23-01-1995	KSA
2	DF	ABDULLAH AL DAWSARI	23-06-1990	KSA
13	DF	TURKI HAMAD AL DOUSARI	26-07-1991	KSA
23	DF	SAYYAF AL BISHI	18-06-1980	KSA
32	DF	ABDULAZIZ BO SHAGRA	23-11-1981	KSA
33	DF	ALI HADI AL BULAYHI	21-11-1989	KSA
45	DF	IBRAHIM AL NAKHLI	09-03-1997	KSA
87	DF	HUSSAIN AL KHULAIF	04-01-1996	KSA
88	DF	MAJED HAZAZI	19-03-1988	KSA
89	DF	ABDULLAH AL AMMAR	01-03-1994	KSA
7	MF	HAMDAN AL HAMDAN	01-12-1984	KSA
8	MF	NOUH AL MOSA	23-02-1991	KSA
10	MF	UKRA (ANDRE ALVES)	16-03-1988	POR
11	MF	HAMAD AL JUHAYYIM	11-10-1987	KSA
14	MF	MOHAMMED AL FEHAID	08-01-1990	KSA
15	MF	AHMED AL MUBARAK	31-03-1985	KSA
17	MF	RIYADH SHARAHILI	28-04-1993	KSA
18	MF	MOHAMMED AL SAEED	14-11-1996	KSA
25	MF	TAWFIQ BUHAYMID	29-10-1987	KSA
26	MF	ALI AHMED AL ZAQAN	11-01-1991	KSA
29	MF	MAMDOUH MOHAMMED	13-09-1986	KSA
61	MF	ALI AHMED AL EID	17-07-1997	KSA
77	MF	ABDELKADER OUESLATI	07-10-1991	FRA
90	MF	HAMAD AL HAMAD	26-08-1987	KSA
9	FW	NATHAN JUNIOR	10-03-1989	BRA
71	FW	HUSSAIN AL JASIM	13-08-1994	KSA
99	FW	ABDULLAH AL BELADI	14-10-1993	KSA



Club Profile

Surprise winners of the Saudi Professional League in 2013, Al Fateh FC produced their second-best league performance last season as they finished fifth. With third-placed Al Ittihad not meeting the AFC Club Licensing Criteria, it earned them a berth in the AFC Champions League playoffs where they beat Uzbek side FC Nasaf 1-0 to reach the group stage for the second time.

The team from Al Hassa will look to give a better account of themselves on the continental stage after going winless in their previous appearance in the competition in 2014.



Head Coach

Fathi Al Jabal

After starting his coaching career as an assistant to Tunisian compatriot Malouche Belhassen at Saudi Arabia's Sadous FC, Fathi Al Jabal went on to coach Saudi sides Al Hazm, Al Shoalah, Hajer and Najran before joining Al Fateh in 2008 when they were in the first division. The 54-year-old Tunisian helped them to win promotion before leading them to the Saudi league title in 2013. Following spells at UAE club Ajman, Saudi sides Najran and Al Shabab and Qatar's Al Shahania, he returned to Al Fateh last September.

Group B

Esteghlal Khuzestan FC (IRN)



SHIRT NO.	POSITION	NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	NATIONALITY
1	GK	VAHID SHEIKHVEYSI	10-01-1987	IRN
33	GK	HASSAN POURHAMIDI	26-03-1998	IRN
40	GK	HOSSEIN POURHAMIDI	26-03-1998	IRN
44	GK	GOODARZ DAVOODI	07-04-1993	IRN
2	DF	MOHAMMAD TAYEBI	11-09-1986	IRN
3	DF	PEYMAN SHIRZADI	24-06-1988	IRN
4	DF	DANIAL MAHINI	25-09-1993	IRN
5	DF	AGHIL KAABI	29-07-1990	IRN
26	DF	ALI DAGHAGHELEH	22-11-1995	IRN
28	DF	BAGHER HASHEMI	02-04-1994	IRN
30	DF	ABOLFAZL ALAI	22-11-1994	IRN
15	MF	PEYMAN HESHMATIMOEZ	24-04-1994	IRN
17	MF	SALMAN BAHRANI	29-11-1989	IRN
21	MF	VAHID NAMDARI	26-06-2000	IRN
23	MF	FARSHAD SALARVAND	11-11-1988	IRN
24	MF	ALIASGHAR ASHOURI	08-12-1988	IRN
31	MF	MOSTAFA GHANBARIZADEH	01-12-1995	IRN
6	FW	MOSTAFA MAHI	24-05-1990	IRN
7	FW	HASSAN BEIT SAEID	01-04-1990	IRN
8	FW	ALOYS NONG	16-10-1983	CMR
9	FW	FARSHAD JANFAZA	15-01-1993	IRN
10	FW	ARASH AFSHIN	21-01-1989	IRN
11	FW	MEHDI ZOBEBIDI	30-11-1991	IRN
16	FW	YOUNES DELFI	02-10-2000	IRN
18	FW	MOHAMMAD SHARIFI	21-03-2000	IRN
70	FW	MEHDI MOMENI	21-09-1985	IRN



Club Profile

Established in 2008, Esteghlal Khuzestan FC were promoted to the Iranian top flight for the first time in 2013 but they struggled in their first two seasons in Iran's top flight and narrowly avoided relegation in 2015 after they won a playoff against Mes Kerman.

However, they improved dramatically in the 2015-16 season and won the Iranian league title for the first time after beating Zobahan 2-0 in their final game of the season to pip Persepolis for top spot on goal difference.



Head Coach

Sirous Pourmousavi

With head coach Abdollah Veisi moving to Sepahan after leading Esteghlal Khuzestan to the Iranian league title last season, the new champions decided to promote from within and elevated former assistant coach Sirous Pourmousavi to the top post. The Ahwaz native has come through the ranks at the club, coaching their youth team and B side before serving as an assistant coach and winning the league title alongside Veisi.

Group B

Lekhwiya SC (QAT)

(now known as 'Al-Duhail FC' after merging with Al Jaish in April)



SHIRT NO.	POSITION	NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	NATIONALITY
1	GK	AMINE LECOMTE	26-04-1990	QAT
18	GK	SHEHAB ELLETHY	18-04-2000	QAT
21	GK	QASEM BURHAN	15-12-1985	QAT
33	GK	AHMAD HATAMI	25-08-1980	QAT
2	DF	MOHAMED MOUSA	01-01-1986	QAT
3	DF	AHMED YASSER	17-05-1994	QAT
4	DF	CHICO FLORES	06-03-1987	ESP
5	DF	KHALED RADWAN	02-10-1990	QAT
6	DF	KHALED MUFTAH	02-07-1992	QAT
14	DF	MOHAMMED TRESOR	04-08-1987	QAT
8	MF	LUIZ JUNIOR	13-01-1989	QAT
10	MF	NAM TAE-HEE	03-07-1991	KOR
12	MF	KARIM BOUDIAF	16-09-1990	QAT
15	MF	ASSIM OMER MADIBO	22-10-1996	QAT
23	MF	ABDULRAHMAN HUSSAIN	16-03-1988	QAT
28	MF	YOUSSEF MSAKNI	28-10-1990	TUN
39	MF	TALAL AL QAHTANI	15-12-1987	QAT
7	FW	ISMAIL MOHAMAD	05-04-1990	QAT
9	FW	EL ARABI YOUSSEF	03-02-1987	FRA
11	FW	MOHAMMED MUNTARI	20-12-1993	QAT
13	FW	HAZEM AHMED	02-02-1998	QAT
16	FW	AHMED AL MEGHESSIB	28-06-1998	QAT
17	FW	YASSER AL YAZIDI	02-02-2000	QAT
19	FW	ALMOEZ ALI	19-08-1996	QAT
20	FW	ALI AFIF	20-01-1988	QAT
22	FW	NASSER SALEH AL KHALFAN	17-10-1993	QAT
25	FW	ABDELRAHMAN MOUSTAFA	05-04-1997	QAT
26	FW	NOOR NOORHASHIM REHMAN	28-03-1997	QAT
29	FW	SAYED ISSA	14-09-1997	QAT
32	FW	FAHD AHMED AL SORI	12-01-1998	QAT



Club Profile

After finishing in the top two of the Qatar Stars League in the previous five seasons, Lekhwiya finished fourth in 2016 but qualified for the AFC Champions League for a sixth consecutive season after coming from two goals down to beat Al Sadd on penalties in the Emir Cup final.

Originally founded in 1938 as Al Shorta (Police Club), Lekhwiya reached the continental quarter-finals in 2013 and 2015 but were eliminated by Qatari rivals El Jaish in the round of 16 last year.



Head Coach

Djamel Belmadi

A former Algeria international midfielder, Djamel Belmadi is in his second spell with Lekhwiya after leading the club to consecutive Qatar Stars League titles in 2011 and 2012. He went on to win the WAFF Championship and Gulf Cup of Nations with the Qatar national team in 2014. Belmadi, who turns 41 on 27 March, was re-appointed by Lekhwiya in 2015 and led the team to victory in the Emir Cup last year which earned them a spot in the AFC Champions League for a sixth consecutive season.

Group C

Al Ain (UAE)



SHIRT NO.	POSITION	NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	NATIONALITY
17	GK	KHALID EISA	15-09-1989	UAE
22	GK	MAHMOOD AL MAS	08-09-1983	UAE
36	GK	DAWOUD SULAIMAN	21-03-1990	UAE
40	GK	MOHAMMED BUSANDA	20-06-1995	UAE
5	DF	ISMAIL AHMED	07-07-1983	UAE
14	DF	MOHAMMED SALEM	16-01-1991	UAE
15	DF	KHALED ABDULRAHMAN	10-09-1988	UAE
19	DF	MOHNAD SALEM	01-03-1985	UAE
23	DF	MOHAMED AHMED	16-04-1989	UAE
31	DF	AHMED SALEM	23-08-1994	UAE
37	DF	RASHED MUHAYER	20-02-1994	UAE
44	DF	SALEM JUMA	25-02-1993	UAE
59	DF	SAEED JUMA AL SAADI	08-07-1998	UAE
77	DF	BANDAR AL AHBABI	09-07-1990	UAE
3	MF	DAWOOD ALI AL BLOOSHI	29-12-1983	UAE
6	MF	AMER ABDULRAHMAN	03-07-1989	UAE
7	MF	CAIO	19-04-1994	BRA
10	MF	OMAR ABDULRAHMAN	20-09-1991	UAE
13	MF	AHMED BARMAN	05-02-1994	UAE
16	MF	MOHAMED ABDULRAHMAN	04-02-1989	UAE
18	MF	IBRAHIM DIAKY	24-05-1982	UAE
26	MF	KHALED KHALFAN	23-01-1996	UAE
29	MF	LEE MYUNG-JOO	24-04-1990	KOR
30	MF	MOHAMMED KHALFAN	28-08-1998	UAE
70	MF	DANILO ASPRILLA	12-01-1989	COL
79	MF	HUSAIN ABDULLA	11-01-1997	UAE
11	FW	SAEED AL KATHEERI	28-03-1988	UAE
20	FW	NASSIR AL SHAMRANI	23-11-1983	KSA
35	FW	YOUSEF AHMED	27-04-1994	UAE
52	FW	ALI EID	01-03-1998	UAE



Club Profile

Winners of the inaugural AFC Champions League tournament in 2003, Al Ain reached the final for the third time last year but finished runners-up after going down 3-2 on aggregate to Korea Republic's Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors.

The AFC Champions League final defeat was one of three near-misses for the United Arab Emirates club in 2016 as they also finished runners-up to Al Ahli in the Emirati professional league and lost on penalties to Al Jazira in the President's Cup final.



Head Coach

Zoran Mamic

Following the departure in January of Zlatko Dalic, who led Al Ain to last year's AFC Champions League final, the UAE club appointed another Croatian, Zoran Mamic as their new head coach. The former Croatia international defender, who spent several years of his playing career in Germany, enjoyed much coaching success in his homeland, winning three consecutive Croatian league titles with Dinamo Zagreb. The 45-year-old arrived in the Middle East in 2016 to take charge of Saudi side Al Nassr before his appointment by Al Ain in January.

Group C

Al Ahli Saudi FC (KSA)



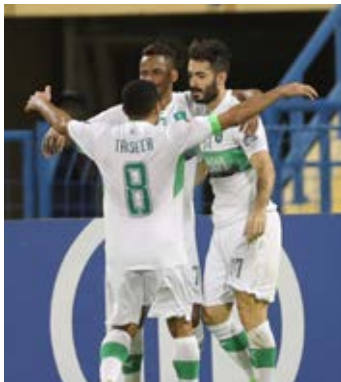
SHIRT NO.	POSITION	NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	NATIONALITY
1	GK	YASSER AL MOSAILEM	27-02-1984	KSA
22	GK	AHMAD ALI AL HARBI	06-10-1994	KSA
66	GK	BASIM AL BAQI	07-11-1989	KSA
2	DF	ALI AL ZUBAIDI	04-01-1993	KSA
4	DF	WALEED BAKSHWN	12-11-1989	KSA
6	DF	MOHAMMED AL FATIL	04-01-1992	KSA
13	DF	MOHAMED ABDELSHAFI	01-07-1985	EGY
21	DF	AQEEL BAALGHAYTH	15-03-1987	KSA
23	DF	SAEED FAWAZ AL MUWALLAD	09-03-1991	KSA
25	DF	MOTAZ HAWSAWI	17-02-1992	KSA
26	DF	MOHAMMED AMAN	08-09-1988	KSA
27	DF	HAMDAN AL SHAMRANI	14-12-1996	KSA
30	DF	SAEED AWADH AL YAMI	04-06-1994	KSA
31	DF	MANSOUR ATEEQ	19-10-1987	KSA
77	DF	AMIR KURDY	11-09-1991	KSA
5	MF	FAHAD AL YAMANI	23-11-1989	KSA
7	MF	SALMAN MUWASHAR	05-10-1988	KSA
8	MF	TAISEER AL JASSAM	25-07-1984	KSA
10	MF	GIANNIS FETFATZIDIS	20-12-1990	GRE
11	MF	HUSSAIN AL MOQAHWI	24-03-1988	KSA
17	MF	AYMAN AL KHULAIF	22-05-1997	KSA
47	MF	MUSTAFA AL BASSAS	02-06-1993	KSA
55	MF	SAAD ABDULAMEER	19-01-1992	IRQ
9	FW	OMAR AL SOMA	23-03-1990	SYR
14	FW	MUHANNAD ASIRI	14-10-1986	KSA
24	FW	ALI MOHAMMED AWAJI	09-03-1991	KSA
45	FW	ABDULFATTAH ASIRI	26-02-1994	KSA



Club Profile

Al Ahli Saudi FC enjoyed a memorable domestic campaign in 2015-16 as they claimed their first Saudi league title since 1984, finishing eight points in front of runners-up Al Hilal, before clinching the double with a 2-1 win over Al Nassr in the King's Cup final.

While their domestic form was good, the Jeddah-based club did not fare too well in last year's AFC Champions League as they went out in the group stage after finishing third behind eventual finalists Al Ain and semi-finalists El Jaish.



Head Coach

Christian Gross

(left the club on May 31, with Al Ahli Saudi still in contention)

A former defender who made one appearance for Switzerland's national team, Christian Gross began his coaching career with Swiss side Wil in 1988 before a stint with his former club Grasshopper where he won a pair of Swiss league titles. Following a spell at England's Tottenham Hotspur, he spent a successful decade at FC Basel where he won four Swiss league crowns. The 62-year-old also coached German outfit Stuttgart and Switzerland's Young Boys before he arrived at Al Ahli in 2014, leading them to victory in the Saudi Crown Prince Cup in 2015 and the league and King's Cup double the following season.



Serhiy Rebrov

A star striker in his prime, Rebrov racked up 75 caps for the Ukrainian national team in a glittering career which included no less than 12 league titles in the Ukraine, Turkey and Russia as well as spells in the English Premier League. Following his retirement, Rebrov made a successful transition into management, initially taking over as caretaker at his former club Dynamo Kyiv, before overseeing a highly successful tenure, which produced five trophies in just over three seasons. At the end of the 2016-17 season, and with a 69 per cent win record, Rebrov joined Al Ahli Saudi just in time to take charge of the side in the knockout stages of the 2017 AFC Champions League.

Group C

FC Bunyodkor (UZB)



SHIRT NO.	POSITION	NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	NATIONALITY
25	GK	MUROTJON ZUKHUROV	23-02-1983	UZB
35	GK	ABDUKARIM MUKHAMEDOV	11-01-1994	UZB
45	GK	DILSHOD KHAMRAEV	11-07-1995	UZB
2	DF	RUSTAMJON ASHURMATOV	07-07-1996	UZB
3	DF	ISLOMJON KOBILOV	01-06-1997	UZB
4	DF	AKRAMJON KOMILOV	14-03-1996	UZB
5	DF	JAVLON MIRABDULLAEV	19-03-1994	UZB
21	DF	DILSHOD AKHMADALIEV	02-11-1994	UZB
24	DF	ERGASH ISMAILOV	28-07-1995	UZB
6	MF	NODIRBEK MAVLANOV	28-01-1996	UZB
7	MF	DUSAN MICIC	29-11-1984	SRB
8	MF	JOVLON IBROKHIMOV	10-12-1990	UZB
15	MF	ALEKSANDAR IGNJATOVIC	11-04-1988	SRB
16	MF	ALISHER SANOEV	19-06-1987	UZB
17	MF	DOSTONBEK KHAMDAMOV	24-07-1996	UZB
18	MF	JAVOKHIR KAKHRAMONOV	21-03-1996	UZB
19	MF	NURILLO TUKHTASINOV	19-02-1997	UZB
20	MF	SARDORBEK AZIMOV	01-06-1995	UZB
22	MF	SHOHRUH GADOEV	31-12-1991	UZB
26	MF	SANJAR KODIRKULOV	27-05-1997	UZB
27	MF	FARKHOD NOMOZOV	01-02-1996	UZB
28	MF	DOVRONBEK UMIROV	03-03-1997	UZB
29	MF	OTABEK SHUKUROV	22-06-1996	UZB
30	MF	KHURSHID GIYOSOV	13-04-1995	UZB
44	MF	MIRJAMOL KOSIMOV	24-09-1995	UZB
9	FW	SHAKHZODBEK NURMATOV	18-09-1991	UZB
10	FW	ELDOR SHOMURODOV	29-06-1995	UZB
11	FW	VADIM CEMIRTAN	21-07-1987	MDA
23	FW	NODIRKHON KAMOLOV	22-10-1994	UZB
97	FW	JAVOKHIR ESONKULOV	20-04-1997	UZB



Club Profile

Bunyodkor finished third in the Uzbek league last season but they secured a spot in the AFC Champions League group stage for the 10th season in a row after beating El Jaish SC of Qatar in a penalty shootout following a 0-0 draw in the playoffs in February.

The Tashkent club reached the AFC Champions League semi-finals in 2008 and 2012 and made it to the knockout rounds on their first seven appearances in the competition from 2008 to 2014. However, they have been eliminated in the group stage for the past two seasons.



Head Coach

Sergey Lushchan

A former Uzbekistan international midfielder, Sergey Lushchan appeared for his country in the 2000 AFC Asian Cup and played for several Russian clubs before he ended his career at Bunyodkor, where he won the Uzbek league in 2008. Following his retirement as a player, the 43-year-old coached the youth team and reserves at Bunyodkor and spent three months in charge of the Uzbekistan U-19 national team before he was appointed as Bunyodkor's head coach in June 2014. He resigned in September 2015 but returned for a second spell in charge the following February and led the Tashkent club to a second-place finish in the league.

Group C

Zobahan FC (IRN)



SHIRT NO.	POSITION	NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	NATIONALITY
12	GK	MOHAMMAD RASHID MAZAHERI	18-05-1989	IRN
22	GK	HAMID ERFANI	21-03-1987	IRN
40	GK	PEYMAN SALMANI	18-04-1994	IRN
2	DF	MOHAMMAD NEJAD MEHDI	20-10-1992	IRN
3	DF	VAHID MOHAMMADZADEH	16-05-1989	IRN
18	DF	ALI HAMAM	25-08-1986	LIB
19	DF	MEHRDAD GHANBARI	22-11-1989	IRN
20	DF	HOJJAT HAGHVERDI	03-02-1993	IRN
24	DF	MEHRAN DERAKHSHAN MEHR	10-08-1998	IRN
26	DF	NIMA TAHERI	15-04-1997	IRN
35	DF	HOSSEIN SANGARGIR	11-05-1998	IRN
6	MF	MAHDI MAHDIPOUR	18-02-1994	IRN
7	MF	MOHAMMADREZA HOSSEINI	15-09-1989	IRN
8	MF	GHADEM HADADIFAR	12-07-1983	IRN
9	MF	RABIH ATAYA	16-07-1989	LIB
10	MF	EHSAN PAHLAVAN	25-07-1993	IRN
14	MF	REZA SHEKARI	31-05-1998	IRN
17	MF	MOHAMMADREZA ABBASI	27-07-1996	IRN
23	MF	DANIAL ESMAEILFAR	18-03-1993	IRN
30	MF	MAHDI RAJABZADEH	22-06-1978	IRN
33	MF	MOHAMMAD SATARI	30-10-1993	IRN
11	FW	MORTEZA TABRIZI	06-01-1991	IRN
25	FW	ALI KHODADADI	19-01-1998	IRN
27	FW	JERRY BENGTON	08-04-1987	HON
70	FW	YASER FEIZI	05-06-1992	IRN



Club Profile

Runners-up in the AFC Champions League in 2010, Zobahan FC returned to the competition last year for the first time since 2012 and topped their group only to be eliminated in the round of 16 by eventual runners-up Al Ain.

The Isfahan club finished a disappointing sixth in Iran's professional league last year but they qualified for the continental tournament for the sixth time after winning the Hazfi Cup for the second straight year with a penalty shootout victory over Esteghlal in the final.



Head Coach

Mojtaba Hosseini

A former striker who spent a decade playing for Zobahan, Mojtaba Hosseini turned to coaching after his retirement in 2005 and served as an assistant coach at Nassaji Mazandaran, Saba Qom, Persepolis, Naft Tehran before he returned to the Isfahan club in 2014 as an assistant to head coach Yahya Golmohammadi. Following the departure of Golmohammadi last September, the 42-year-old was elevated to the top job for the first time.

Group D

Al Hilal SFC (KSA)



SHIRT NO.	POSITION	NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	NATIONALITY
1	GK	ABDULLAH AL MUAIOUF	23-01-1987	KSA
22	GK	FAHAD AL THUNAYYAN	29-08-1986	KSA
28	GK	MARWAN ABDULAZIZ	12-04-1996	KSA
30	GK	AHMED WAKID	25-03-1992	KSA
2	DF	MOHAMMED AL BURAYK	15-09-1992	KSA
4	DF	ABDULLA ZORI	13-08-1987	KSA
5	DF	AHMED SHARAHILI	08-05-1994	KSA
12	DF	YASIR AL SHAHRANI	25-05-1992	KSA
17	DF	ABDULLAH AL HAFITH	25-12-1992	KSA
33	DF	OSAMA HAWSAWI	31-03-1988	KSA
51	DF	HUSSEIN SALEH SALEM	21-09-1997	KSA
62	DF	ADEL AMIN AL MUWALLAD	01-04-1997	KSA
70	DF	MOHAMMED JAHFALI	24-10-1990	KSA
3	MF	CARLOS EDUARDO	17-10-1989	BRA
6	MF	ABDULMALEK AL KHAIBRI	13-03-1986	KSA
7	MF	SALMAN AL FARAJ	01-08-1989	KSA
8	MF	ABDULLAH OTAYF	03-08-1992	KSA
10	MF	MOHAMMED AL SHALHOUB	08-12-1980	KSA
16	MF	NICOLAS MILESI	10-11-1992	URU
18	MF	ABDULMAJEED AL RUWAILI	28-08-1986	KSA
21	MF	MAJED AL NAJRANI	25-01-1993	KSA
4	MF	NAWAF AL ABID	26-01-1990	KSA
25	MF	FAISAL DARWISH	23-04-1990	KSA
26	MF	NASSER ESSA AL DAWSARI	19-12-1998	KSA
29	MF	SALEM AL DAWSARI	19-08-1991	KSA
55	MF	MUHANNAD FALLATAH	02-02-1996	KSA
9	FW	LEONARDO BONATINI	28-03-1994	ITA
20	FW	YASSER AL QAHTANI	10-10-1982	KSA
23	FW	ABDULRAHMAN ALYAMI	19-06-1997	KSA
77	FW	OMAR KHRIBIN	15-01-1994	SYR



Club Profile

Al Hilal SFC are one of Asia's most successful clubs with victories in the Asian Club Championship in 1991 and 2000, plus a pair of triumphs in both the Asian Cup Winners' Cup and Asian Super Cup.

While the Riyadh club won the Crown Prince Cup for a record 13th time in 2016, they endured much disappointment last season as they finished runners-up in the Saudi league, went out in the King's Cup semi-finals and were eliminated in the last 16 of the AFC Champions League by Uzbek side Lokomotiv.



Head Coach

Ramón Díaz

A former Argentina international forward, Ramón Díaz is in his first coaching stint in Asia after spending much of his managerial career in South America. Díaz played for several clubs in Argentina, Italy and France before he ended his playing career in Japan at Yokohama Marinos. The 57-year-old's first coaching job was at his former club River Plate in 1995 where he won several titles including the Copa Libertadores. Prior to his appointment by Al Hilal, he coached Paraguay's national team to the semi-finals of the 2015 Copa America.

Group D

Al Rayyan SC (QAT)



SHIRT NO.	POSITION	NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	NATIONALITY
1	GK	SOUD AL HAJIRI	19-07-1986	QAT
22	GK	MOHAMMED AL JASSER	21-03-1992	QAT
30	GK	OUMAR BARRY	18-07-1986	QAT
2	DF	MOHAMED AL AELDIN	24-01-1994	QAT
19	DF	ABDULMAJID ANAD	07-01-1994	QAT
70	DF	MUSAAB KHIDIR	01-01-1993	QAT
3	MF	RIADH MEKIDECHE	27-07-1995	QAT
5	MF	NATHAN OTAVIO	02-06-1990	QAT
6	MF	ABDULRAHMAN AL KORBI	18-08-1994	QAT
11	MF	ABDULKAREEM SALEM	25-03-1991	QAT
13	MF	GONZALO VIERA	08-02-1987	ITA
15	MF	VICTOR CACERES	25-03-1985	PAR
17	MF	KHALID AL ZIKIBA	19-06-1986	QAT
21	MF	MOHAMMED SHAMI	30-01-1993	QAT
24	MF	MUSA HAROON	13-09-1985	QAT
25	MF	MOSAAB MOHAMOUD	01-01-1983	QAT
29	MF	YOUNES YAQOUB	14-03-1986	QAT
31	MF	DANIEL GOUMOU	04-10-1990	QAT
7	FW	AHMED AL AAELDIN	31-01-1993	QAT
9	FW	SERGIO GARCIA	09-06-1983	ESP
10	FW	RODRIGO TABATA	19-11-1980	QAT
16	FW	ABDULRAHMAN AL HRAZI	01-01-1994	QAT
20	FW	KOH MYONG-JIN	09-09-1988	KOR
23	FW	SEBASTIAN SORIA	08-11-1983	QAT
95	FW	SAOUD FARHAN	11-02-1995	QAT



Club Profile

Al Rayyan SC were surprisingly relegated from the Qatar Stars League in 2014 but they bounced back superbly from that setback, topping the second tier in 2015 before winning the top-flight title in decisive fashion last season when they finished 14 points ahead of runners-up El Jaish.

It was their first league championship since 1995 and they are now looking to make an impression in the AFC Champions League after failing to get past the group stage in their six previous appearances in the continental tournament.



Head Coach

Michael Laudrup

After ending his highly-successful playing career in 1998, former Denmark international forward Michael Laudrup turned his attention to coaching. He served as an assistant coach with Denmark for two years and was in charge of clubs in the Spanish, Russian and English leagues before he moved to Qatar in 2014 to join Lekhwiya. The 52-year-old steered Lekhwiya to the Qatari league title in 2014-15 before moving to their rivals Al Rayyan and winning a second consecutive league championship the following year.

Group D

Persepolis FC (IRN)



SHIRT NO.	POSITION	NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	NATIONALITY
1	GK	ALIREZA BEIRANVAND	21-09-1992	IRN
12	GK	ABOLFAZL DARVISHAND	13-01-1997	IRN
44	GK	BOZIDAR RADOSEVIC	04-04-1989	CRO
4	DF	JALAL HOSSEINI	03-02-1982	IRN
5	DF	HAMAD AGHAEI	27-09-1997	IRN
13	DF	HOSSEIN MAHINI	16-09-1986	IRN
15	DF	MOHAMMAD ANSARI	23-09-1991	IRN
17	DF	SADEGH MOHARRAMI	01-03-1996	IRN
18	DF	MOHSEN RABIKHAH	24-12-1987	IRN
22	DF	OLEKSIY POLYASKYY	12-04-1986	UKR
27	DF	RAMIN REZAEIAN	21-03-1990	IRN
7	MF	SOROUSH RAFIEI	24-03-1990	IRN
10	MF	FARSHAD AHMADZADEH	23-09-1992	IRN
11	MF	KAMAL KAMYABINIA	18-01-1989	IRN
25	MF	EHSAN ALVANZADEH	17-03-1994	IRN
37	MF	HAMIDREZA TAHERKHANI	25-03-1999	IRN
77	MF	MOHSEN MOSALMAN	27-01-1991	IRN
88	MF	SAMAN NARIMANJAHAN	18-04-1991	IRN
9	FW	MEHDI TAREMI	18-07-1992	IRN
14	FW	REZA KARMOLLACAHAAAB	12-07-1997	IRN
19	FW	VAHID AMIRI	02-04-1988	IRN
66	FW	SHAHAB KARAMI	16-03-1991	IRN
70	FW	ALI ALIPOUR	11-11-1995	IRN
80	FW	VOLODYMYR PRYYOMOV	02-01-1986	UKR
90	FW	GODWIN MENSHA	02-09-1989	NGR



Club Profile

Iranian league champions on a record nine occasions, Persepolis narrowly missed out on a 10th title last season. After a tight battle which went right down to the final round of games, they finished runners-up to Esteghlal Khuzestan on goal difference.

The Tehran club lifted the Asian Cup Winners' Cup in 1991 but they have failed to sparkle in their previous five AFC Champions League appearances with the best performances coming in 2009, 2012 and 2015 when they reached the last 16.



Head Coach

Branko Ivankovic

Veteran Croatian coach Branko Ivankovic is one of Asian football's most experienced tacticians with spells in charge of teams in Iran, China and Saudi Arabia. After becoming Iran's national coach in 2002, he steered Team Melli to third place in the 2004 AFC Asian Cup and led them to qualification for the 2006 FIFA World Cup. Following a spell in Croatia at Dinamo Zagreb, he returned to Asia to lead Shandong Luneng to the 2010 Chinese Super League title. The 63-year-old also coached at Al Ettifaq and Al Wahda in Saudi Arabia and had another stint with Dinamo Zagreb before he returned to Iran in 2015 to take the helm at Persepolis.

Group D

Al Wahda (UAE)



SHIRT NO.	POSITION	NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	NATIONALITY
1	GK	MOHAMED HASAN AL SHAMSI	04-01-1997	UAE
18	GK	ALI AL HOSANI	26-05-1988	UAE
50	GK	RASHED ALI	02-12-1989	UAE
2	DF	MOHAMMED AL MENHALI	27-10-1990	UAE
3	DF	MOHAMED SAIF	22-06-1993	UAE
4	DF	SALEM SULTAN	09-05-1993	UAE
8	DF	HAMDAN AL KAMALI	02-05-1989	UAE
19	DF	KHALED EBRAHEIM AL DHANHANI	17-01-1997	UAE
21	DF	ABDULLA FAISAL AL KARBI	26-08-1998	UAE
23	DF	RIM CHANG-WOO	13-02-1992	KOR
24	DF	ABDULRAHEEM ABDULRAHMAN	24-10-1994	UAE
37	DF	AHMED RASHID	19-01-1997	UAE
5	MF	MOHAMED ABDULBASIT	19-10-1995	UAE
6	MF	SULTAN AL GHAFRI	18-09-1986	UAE
9	MF	JORGE VALDIVIA	19-10-1983	CHI
17	MF	SUHAIL SALEM	19-05-1993	UAE
20	MF	NASIR ABDULHADI	16-12-1989	UAE
22	MF	BALAZS DZSUDZSAK	23-12-1986	HUN
36	MF	AHMED AL AKBERI	15-07-1997	UAE
77	MF	KHALIL IBRAHIM	04-05-1993	UAE
10	FW	ISMAEIL MATAR	07-04-1983	UAE
11	FW	SEBASTIAN TAGLIABUE	22-02-1985	ARG
30	FW	TAREQ AHMED AN ANTALI	19-05-1990	UAE
42	FW	MOHAMED AL AKBERI	15-03-1996	UAE
70	FW	MOHAMED RASHID AL HAMMADI	11-05-1997	UAE



Club Profile

After finishing third in the United Arab Emirates domestic league last season, Al Wahda beat Jordanian side Al Wehdlat 3-0 in the playoffs in February to qualify for the AFC Champions League group stage for the seventh time.

The Abu Dhabi club have made six previous appearances in the continental tournament with their best performance coming in 2007 when they eliminated Saudi Arabian giants Al Hilal in the last eight before going out to Iranian side Sepahan in the semi-finals.



Head Coach

Javier Aguirre

A former Mexico international midfielder, Javier Aguirre has had two spells in charge of his country's national team, leading them to the last 16 of the 2002 and 2010 FIFA World Cups and victory in the 2009 CONCACAF Gold Cup. He also coached Spanish sides Osasuna, Atletico Madrid, Real Zaragoza and Espanyol before he became Japan's national coach in 2014, taking the Blue Samurai to the quarter-finals of the AFC Asian Cup. The 58-year-old took charge of Al Wahda in June 2015, helping them to win the UAE League Cup and to finish in third place in the league in his first season in charge.

Group E

Brisbane Roar (AUS)



SHIRT NO.	POSITION	NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	NATIONALITY
1	GK	MICHAEL THEO	11-02-1981	AUS
21	GK	JAMIE YOUNG	25-08-1985	AUS
43	GK	TOMISLAV BILIC	01-09-1997	AUS
3	DF	LUKE DEVERE	05-11-1989	AUS
4	DF	DANIEL BOWLES	19-10-1991	AUS
5	DF	COREY BROWN	07-01-1994	AUS
6	DF	AVRAM PAPADOPOULOS	03-12-1984	AUS
13	DF	JADE NORTH	07-01-1982	AUS
19	DF	JACK HINGERT	26-09-1990	AUS
24	DF	CONNOR O'TOOLE	04-07-1997	AUS
25	DF	KYE ROWLES	24-06-1998	AUS
46	DF	CAMERON CRESTANI	18-04-1996	AUS
7	MF	THOMAS KRISTENSEN	17-04-1983	DEN
8	MF	JACOB PEPPER	08-05-1992	AUS
16	MF	NATHAN KONSTANDOPOULOS	26-06-1996	AUS
17	MF	MATT MCKAY	11-01-1983	AUS
22	MF	THOMAS BROICH	29-01-1981	GER
29	MF	JOE CALETTI	14-09-1998	AUS
9	FW	JAMIE MACLAREN	29-07-1993	AUS
10	FW	BRETT HOLMAN	27-03-1984	AUS
11	FW	TOMMY OAR	10-12-1991	AUS
15	FW	MANUEL ARANA	03-12-1984	ESP
20	FW	SHANNON BRADY	21-06-1996	AUS
26	FW	NICHOLAS D'AGOSTINO	25-02-1998	AUS
28	FW	BRANDON BORRELLO	25-07-1995	AUS
33	FW	JOEY KATEBIAN	09-11-1995	AUS
50	FW	DANE INGHAM	08-06-1999	AUS



Club Profile

Brisbane Roar narrowly missed out on the A-League Premiership title in 2016 after a draw in their final regular season game saw them overtaken by Adelaide United and Western Sydney Wanderers as they finished third in the table. They then bowed out of the A-League finals series after a dramatic 5-4 loss to Western Sydney in the semi-finals.

Awarded a spot in the AFC Champions League playoffs, they stunned Shanghai Shenhua with a 2-0 win in China in February to secure their place in the group stage for a third time.



Head Coach

John Aloisi

John Aloisi will forever remain an icon in Australia for scoring the penalty that saw the Socceroos defeat Uruguay to qualify for the FIFA World Cup finals in Germany in 2006. He has since gone on to become an accomplished coach, using his extensive playing experience across many of Europe's top leagues to great effect. After a stint with Melbourne Heart, Aloisi was appointed Brisbane Roar coach in May 2015 and led the club into the AFC Champions League playoffs in his first season in charge, with Roar seeing off Shanghai Shenhua to book their berth in the group stages.

Group E

Kashima Antlers FC (JPN)



SHIRT NO.	POSITION	NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	NATIONALITY
1	GK	KWOUN SUN-TAE	11-09-1984	KOR
21	GK	HITOSHI SOGAHATA	02-08-1979	JPN
29	GK	SHINICHIRO KAWAMATA	23-07-1989	JPN
31	GK	YUTO KOIZUMI	14-09-1995	JPN
3	DF	GEN SHOJI	11-12-1992	JPN
5	DF	NAOMICHI UEDA	24-10-1994	JPN
15	DF	YUTO MISAO	16-04-1991	JPN
16	DF	SHUTO YAMAMOTO	01-06-1985	JPN
22	DF	DAIGO NISHI	28-08-1987	JPN
23	DF	ITSUKI ODA	16-07-1998	JPN
24	DF	YUKITOSHI ITO	03-09-1993	JPN
28	DF	KOKI MACHIDA	25-08-1989	JPN
4	MF	LEO SILVA	24-12-1985	BRA
6	MF	RYOTA NAGAKI	04-06-1988	JPN
8	MF	SHOMA DOI	21-05-1992	JPN
11	MF	LEANDRO	12-05-1993	BRA
13	MF	ATSUTAKA NAKAMURA	13-09-1990	JPN
20	MF	KENTO MISAO	16-04-1996	JPN
25	MF	YASUSHI ENDO	07-04-1988	JPN
26	MF	KAZUNE KUBOTA	01-01-1997	JPN
27	MF	TAKAHIDE UMEBACHI	08-06-1992	JPN
33	MF	MU KANAZAKI	16-02-1989	JPN
36	MF	TOSHIYA TANAKA	02-12-1997	JPN
40	MF	MITSUO OGASAWARA	05-04-1979	JPN
7	FW	PEDRO JUNIOR	29-01-1987	BRA
9	FW	YUMA SUZUKI	26-04-1996	JPN
14	FW	TAKESHI KANAMORI	04-04-1994	JPN
18	FW	SHUHEI AKASAKI	01-09-1991	JPN
30	FW	HIROKI ABE	28-01-1999	JPN



Club Profile

The 2016 season proved a memorable one for Kashima Antlers as they completed the Japanese double, winning the J1 League title for a record eighth time before beating Kawasaki Frontale in the Emperor's Cup final. They also became the first Asian club to reach the FIFA Club World Cup final, taking Real Madrid to extra-time before eventually finishing runners-up.

Kashima are Japan's most successful club but they have yet to shine in the AFC Champions League, reaching the quarter-finals in 2008 and going out in the last 16 three times.



Head Coach

Masatada Ishii

Masatada Ishii took over as Kashima Antlers head coach at the start of the 2015 season, and the former midfielder has proven to be a revelation for the club, guiding the Ibaraki side to the League Cup in his first season before winning the domestic league and cup double last year. That feat earned the 50-year-old – who played for Kashima and also worked as a youth coach, conditioning coach and an assistant before replacing Toninho Cerezo to become only the club's second ever Japanese head coach – the title of J.League Manager of the Year last season.

Group E

Muangthong United (THA)



SHIRT NO.	POSITION	NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	NATIONALITY
1	GK	KAWIN THAMSATCHANAN	26-01-1990	THA
28	GK	PRASIT PHADUNGCHOK	13-10-1983	THA
37	GK	PUTTHIPONG POMLEE	10-10-1990	THA
2	DF	PEREPAT NOTECHAIYA	04-02-1993	THA
3	DF	THEERATHON BUNMATHAN	06-02-1990	THA
5	DF	NAOAKI AOYAMA	18-07-1986	JPN
15	DF	LEE HO	22-10-1983	KOR
19	DF	TRISTAN DO	31-01-1993	THA
25	DF	ADISON PROMRAK	21-10-1993	THA
26	DF	SUPHAN THONGSONG	26-08-1994	THA
29	DF	CELIO SANTOS	20-07-1987	THA
33	DF	PITAKPONG KUNSUWAN	11-02-1988	THA
6	MF	SARACH YOOYEN	30-05-1992	THA
13	MF	RATCHAPOL NAWANNO	28-04-1986	THA
14	MF	SORAWIT PANTHONG	20-02-1997	THA
16	MF	SANUKRAN THINJOM	12-09-1993	THA
18	MF	CHANATHIP SONGKRASIN	05-10-1993	THA
20	MF	WONGSAKORN CHAIKULTHWIN	16-09-1996	THA
34	MF	WATTANA PLAYNUM	19-08-1989	THA
9	FW	XISCO	26-06-1986	ESP
10	FW	TEERASIL DANGDA	06-06-1988	THA
11	FW	ADISAK KRAISORN	01-02-1991	THA
22	FW	MONGKOL THOSAKRAI	09-05-1987	THA



Club Profile

Muangthong United were declared Thai league champions for the fourth time in 2016 as they held a five-point lead with three games left when the remaining matches were cancelled following the death of King Bhumibol Adulyadej in October.

Founded in 1989, the 'Twin Qilins' made their only previous appearance in the AFC Champions League group stage in 2013 although they have also taken part in the playoffs on four occasions since 2010. They missed out on last year's group stage after bowing out to eventual quarter-finalists Shanghai SIPG.



Head Coach

Totchtawan Sripan

One of the greatest players in the history of Thai football, Totchtawan Sripan (previously known as Tawan Sripan) had a glittering career on the field of play, winning the AFF Championship on three occasions as well as four gold medals at the South East Asian Games. After stints with BEC Tero Sasana, Saraburi and Police United, the 45-year-old took over as head coach at Muangthong United at the start of 2016, guiding the club to the Thai Premier League and the final of the League Cup, with the title shared with Buriram United as the competition was cancelled following the death of King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

Group E

Ulsan Hyundai FC (KOR)



SHIRT NO.	POSITION	NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	NATIONALITY
1	GK	KIM YONG-DAE	11-10-1979	KOR
21	GK	JO SO-HUK	18-03-1987	KOR
31	GK	JANG DAE-HEE	19-04-1994	KOR
3	DF	LEE KI-JE	09-07-1991	KOR
4	DF	KANG MIN-SOO	14-02-1986	KOR
13	DF	LEE MYUNG-JAE	04-11-1993	KOR
15	DF	JUNG SEUNG-HYUN	03-04-1994	KOR
22	DF	KIM CHI-GON	29-07-1983	KOR
23	DF	CHOI KYU-BAEK	23-01-1994	KOR
25	DF	JEONG DONG-HO	07-03-1990	KOR
27	DF	KIM CHANG-SOO	12-09-1985	KOR
33	DF	LEE JI-HUN	24-03-1994	KOR
40	DF	RICHARD WINDBICHLER	02-04-1991	AUT
5	MF	PARK YONG-WOO	10-09-1993	KOR
6	MF	JEONG JAE-YONG	14-09-1990	KOR
7	MF	KIM IN-SUNG	19-09-1989	KOR
8	MF	KIM SUNG-HWAN	15-12-1986	KOR
9	MF	MIRSLAV ORSIC	29-12-1992	CRO
11	MF	SUH MYEONG-WON	19-04-1995	KOR
16	MF	KIM GEON-UNG	29-08-1997	KOR
17	MF	SANG SEONG-JAI	12-09-1995	KOR
20	MF	HAN SANG-WUN	03-05-1986	KOR
32	MF	LEE YEONG-JAE	13-09-1994	KOR
42	MF	HAN SEUNG-GYU	28-09-1996	KOR
70	MF	DIMITRIOS PETRATOS	10-11-1992	AUS
10	FW	LEE JONG-HO	24-02-1992	KOR
18	FW	NAM HEE-CHEOL	02-05-1995	KOR
19	FW	KIM SEUNG-JUN	11-09-1994	KOR
29	FW	KIM YONG-JIN	10-06-1993	KOR
44	FW	IVAN KOVACEC	27-06-1988	CRO



Club Profile

Winners of the AFC Champions League in 2006, Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors were crowned continental champions for the second time last year after they overcame Al Ain of the United Arab Emirates 3-2 on aggregate in a hard-fought final.

Their success in the AFC Champions League more than made up for the disappointment of missing out on a third consecutive K League Classic title as they were overtaken by FC Seoul after a 1-0 loss to their rivals on the final day of the season.



Head Coach

Kim Do-hoon

Former Korea Republic national team striker Kim Do-hoon was appointed head coach of Ulsan Hyundai ahead of the start of the 2017 season, replacing Yoon Jong-hwan, who had taken the club into the AFC Champions League with a fourth-place finish in the K League Classic. Kim, who was top scorer in the AFC Champions League as Seongnam Ilhwa Chunma finished runners-up to Al Ittihad in 2004, took over as coach after leading Incheon United to 10th in last season's domestic campaign having previously worked with his country's U20 squad as well as an assistant at Seongnam and Gangwon FC.

Group F

FC Seoul (KOR)



SHIRT NO.	POSITION	NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	NATIONALITY
1	GK	YOO HYUN	01-08-1984	KOR
21	GK	YANG HAN-BEEN	30-08-1991	KOR
30	GK	KIM CHOL-HO	25-10-1995	KOR
2	DF	HWANG HYUN-SOO	22-07-1995	KOR
4	DF	KIM DONG-WOO	05-02-1988	KOR
17	DF	SHIN KWANG-HOON	18-03-1987	KOR
20	DF	JUNG IN-WHAN	15-12-1986	KOR
33	DF	PARK MING-YU	10-08-1995	KOR
38	DF	KIM KUN-HOAN	12-08-1986	KOR
55	DF	KWAK TAE-HWI	08-07-1981	KOR
88	DF	LEE KYU-RO	20-08-1988	KOR
5	MF	OSMAR BARBA	05-06-1988	ESP
6	MF	JU SE-JONG	30-10-1990	KOR
7	MF	KIM CHI-WOO	11-11-1983	KOR
13	MF	GO YO-HAN	10-03-1988	KOR
14	MF	CHO CHAN-HO	10-04-1986	KOR
15	MF	KIM WON-SIK	05-11-1991	KOR
16	MF	HA DAE-SUNG	02-03-1985	KOR
19	MF	SIM SANG-MIN	21-05-1993	KOR
22	MF	YOON SEUNG-WON	11-02-1995	KOR
23	MF	LEE SEOK-HYUN	13-06-1990	KOR
29	MF	HWANG KI-WOOK	10-06-1996	KOR
35	MF	LIM MIN-HYEOK	05-03-1997	KOR
3	FW	SIM WOO-YEON	03-04-1985	KOR
8	FW	LEE SANG-HO	09-05-1987	KOR
9	FW	DEJAN DAMJANOVIC	27-07-1981	MNE
10	FW	PARK CHU-YOUNG	10-07-1985	KOR
11	FW	YUN IL-LOK	07-03-1992	KOR
32	FW	KIM HANG-IL	21-06-1995	KOR
34	FW	MAURINHO	10-12-1989	BRA



Club Profile

FC Seoul were eliminated in last year's AFC Champions League semi-finals by Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors but they exacted revenge on their Korea Republic rivals by beating them 1-0 in their final game of the K League Classic season to win their first league title since 2012.

FC Seoul are appearing in the AFC Champions League for a fifth consecutive year but while they have appeared in three of the last four semi-finals and were runners-up in 2013, they have still yet to win a continental club title.



Head Coach

Hwang Sun-hong

A prolific goal scorer during his playing days, Hwang Sun-hong is a legend of Korean football having been part of the squad that reached the semi-finals of the 2002 FIFA World Cup on home soil. Hwang went into coaching when he retired, working with Busan I'Park before moving to Pohang Steelers, the club he represented with great success as a player, winning the Asian Club Championship in 1998. Hwang replaced Choi Yong-soo at the helm of FC Seoul midway through last season, steering the club to the K League Classic title and to the semi-finals of the AFC Champions League.

Group F

Shanghai SIPG (CHN)



SHIRT NO.	POSITION	NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	NATIONALITY
1	GK	YAN JUNLING	28-01-1991	CHN
22	GK	SUN LE	17-09-1989	CHN
34	GK	CHEN WEI	14-02-1998	CHN
35	GK	SHI XIAODONG	26-02-1997	CHN
2	DF	ZHANG WEI	28-03-1993	CHN
4	DF	WANG SHENCHAO	08-02-1989	CHN
5	DF	WANG JIAJIE	15-11-1988	CHN
13	DF	WEI ZHEN	12-02-1997	CHN
23	DF	FU HUAN	12-07-1993	CHN
27	DF	SHI KE	08-01-1993	CHN
28	DF	HE GUAN	25-01-1993	CHN
29	DF	ZHENG ZHIYUN	17-02-1995	CHN
36	DF	YU HAO	05-09-1997	CHN
6	MF	CAI HUIKANG	10-10-1989	CHN
17	MF	ZHANG HUACHEN	16-03-1998	CHN
18	MF	ZHANG YI	17-08-1993	CHN
19	MF	JIA TIANZI	28-02-1994	CHN
21	MF	YU HAI	04-06-1987	CHN
25	MF	ODIL AKHMEDOV	25-11-1987	UZB
26	MF	GAO HAISHENG	06-01-1997	CHN
31	MF	JIANG ZILEI	10-09-1997	CHN
7	FW	WU LEI	19-11-1991	CHN
8	FW	OSCAR	09-09-1991	BRA
9	FW	ELKESON	13-07-1989	BRA
10	FW	HULK	25-07-1986	BRA
11	FW	LU WENJUN	11-03-1989	CHN
14	FW	LI SHENGLONG	30-07-1992	CHN
15	FW	LIN CHUANGYI	28-01-1993	CHN
24	FW	LEI WENJIE	10-01-1997	CHN
30	FW	GAO ZHIJIE	16-06-1997	CHN



Club Profile

A rising force in Chinese football, Shanghai SIPG FC secured their spot in the AFC Champions League for the second season in a row after finishing third in the Chinese Super League last season and beating Thai side Sukhothai FC in the playoffs in February.

Formed in 2005 as Shanghai East Asia, SIPG were runners-up in the CSL in 2015 and made a solid debut in the AFC Champions League last year when they reached the quarter-finals before going out to eventual winners Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors.



Head Coach

Andre Villas-Boas

Andre Villas-Boas became the youngest coach to win a major European club trophy in 2010-11 when he steered Porto to the Europa League crown, the same season he won the domestic league and cup. That success turned the Portuguese coach into one of the hottest properties in the global game and, after stints with Chelsea and Tottenham Hotspur in the English Premier League, Villas-Boas moved to Russia to join Zenit St Petersburg. There he won the league title in 2014-15 before the 39-year-old replaced Sven-Goran Eriksson at Shanghai SIPG at the end of the 2016 season.

Group F

Urawa Red Diamonds (JPN)



SHIRT NO.	POSITION	NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	NATIONALITY
1	GK	SHUSAKU NISHIKAWA	18-06-1986	JPN
23	GK	NAO IWADATE	17-08-1988	JPN
25	GK	TETSUYA ENOMOTO	02-05-1983	JPN
28	GK	HARUKI FUKUSHIMA	08-04-1993	JPN
4	DF	DAISUKE NASU	10-10-1981	JPN
5	DF	TOMOAKI MAKINO	11-05-1987	JPN
6	DF	WATARU ENDO	09-02-1993	JPN
17	DF	YU TAMARA	22-11-1992	JPN
46	DF	RYOTA MORIWAKI	06-04-1986	JPN
3	MF	TOMOYA UGAJIN	23-03-1988	JPN
7	MF	TSUKASA UMESAKI	23-02-1987	JPN
10	MF	YOSUKE KASHIWAGI	15-12-1987	JPN
14	MF	TADAAKI HIRAKAWA	01-05-1979	JPN
15	MF	KASUKI NAGASAWA	16-12-1991	JPN
16	MF	TAKUYA AOKI	16-09-1989	JPN
18	MF	YOSHIAKI KOMAI	06-06-1992	JPN
22	MF	YUKI ABE	06-09-1981	JPN
24	MF	TAKAHIRO SEKINE	19-04-1995	JPN
26	MF	RYOTARO ITO	06-02-1998	JPN
38	MF	DAISUKI KIKUCHI	12-04-1991	JPN
39	MF	SHINYA YAJIMA	18-01-1994	JPN
8	FW	RAFAEL DA SILVA	04-04-1992	BRA
9	FW	YUKI MUTO	07-11-1988	JPN
13	FW	TOSHIYUKI TAKAGI	25-05-1991	JPN
19	FW	ADO ONAIWU	08-11-1995	JPN
20	FW	TADANARI LEE	19-12-1985	JPN
21	FW	ZLATAN LJUBIJANKIC	15-12-1983	SVN
30	FW	SHINZOH KOHROGI	31-07-1986	JPN



Club Profile

Urawa Red Diamonds became the first Japanese winners of the AFC Champions League in 2007 when they beat Iranian side Sepahan in the final. They reached the semi-finals a year later but went out in the round of 16 last year after going down in a penalty shootout to FC Seoul.

The Saitama-based club topped the overall J1 League table in 2016 but missed out on a second league title after they blew a two-goal advantage against Kashima Antlers in the championship final and lost on away goals.



Head Coach

Mihailo Petrovic

(replaced on July 30 with Urawa Red Diamonds still in contention)

Appointed by Urawa Reds in December 2011 after a successful five-year spell at their J.League rivals Sanfrecce Hiroshima, Mihailo Petrovic has helped transform the fortunes of the Saitama side from a relegation-threatened club to one challenging for domestic honours. A former Yugoslavia international midfielder, the 59-year-old coached in Slovenia and Austria before he arrived at Sanfrecce, where he won the J2 title in 2008. He led Urawa to the J.League championship playoff final last season, where they were defeated by Kashima Antlers.



Takafumi Hori

A veteran of over 150 top-flight matches for Urawa Red Diamonds in the 1990s, former midfielder Hori took over as the club's caretaker boss for a brief five-match spell at the end of the 2011. The Saitama club then appointed Mihailo Petrovic, but Hori's career would come full circle six years later when he replaced the Serb ahead of the AFC Champions League quarter finals.

Group F

Western Sydney Wanderers (AUS)



SHIRT NO.	POSITION	NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	NATIONALITY
1	GK	JERRAD TYSON	21-09-1989	AUS
20	GK	VEDRAN JANJETOVIC	20-08-1987	AUS
39	GK	NICHOLAS SUMAN	28-02-2000	AUS
2	DF	SHANNON COLE	04-08-1984	AUS
3	DF	JACK CLISBY	16-02-1992	AUS
5	DF	BRENDAN HAMILL	18-09-1992	AUS
12	DF	SCOTT NEVILLE	11-01-1989	AUS
17	DF	ARITZ BORDA	03-01-1985	ESP
18	DF	ROBERT CORNTHWAITE	24-10-1985	AUS
22	DF	JONATHAN ASPROPOTAMATIS	07-06-1996	AUS
26	DF	JACKSON BANDIERA	16-04-1998	AUS
42	DF	KEANU BACCUS	07-06-1998	AUS
6	MF	MITCH NICHOLS	01-05-1989	AUS
7	MF	STEVEN LUSTICA	12-04-1991	AUS
8	MF	DIMAS	06-02-1983	ESP
14	MF	JUMPEI KUSUKAMI	27-08-1987	JPN
15	MF	KEARYN BACCHUS	05-09-1991	AUS
19	MF	JACOB MELLING	04-04-1995	AUS
21	MF	MARIO SHABOW	05-05-1998	AUS
24	MF	TERRY ANTONIS	26-11-1993	AUS
25	MF	LIAM YOULLEY	20-02-1997	AUS
50	MF	TARIQ MAIA	11-06-1997	AUS
10	FW	NICOLAS MARTINEZ	25-09-1987	POR
11	FW	BRENDON SANTALAB	09-09-1982	AUS
16	FW	JAUSHUA SOTIRIO	11-10-1995	AUS
23	FW	SCOT LACHLAN	15-04-1997	AUS
28	FW	STEFAN ZINNI	06-07-1996	AUS
29	FW	RYAN GRIFFITHS	21-08-1981	AUS
47	FW	RAMY NAJJARINE	23-04-2000	AUS
49	FW	ABRAHAM MAJOK	13-10-1998	AUS



Club Profile

Formed in 2012, Western Sydney Wanderers made history on their AFC Champions League debut two years later when they stunned Al Hilal of Saudi Arabia 1-0 on aggregate in the final to become the first Australian side to win an Asian continental club title.

Western Sydney enjoyed immediate success in the A-League, winning the Premiership in their inaugural campaign in 2012-13 and they have finished runners-up in three of the last four seasons, reaching the Grand Final in 2013, 2014 and 2016.



Head Coach

Tony Popovic

Former Australia international defender Tony Popovic started his coaching career with Sydney FC, standing in as caretaker boss after a stint as an assistant before a spell as an assistant coach with English club Crystal Palace, where he previously spent five seasons of his playing career. Popovic was appointed head coach of Western Sydney Wanderers upon the club's creation in 2012 and he proved his credentials a little more than two years later when he steered Wanderers to the AFC Champions League crown in late 2014, defeating Al Hilal of Saudi Arabia in the final before also being named AFC Coach of the Year.

Group G

Eastern SC (HKG)



SHIRT NO.	POSITION	NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	NATIONALITY
1	GK	YAPP HUNG FAI	21-03-1990	HKG
16	GK	HO KWOK CHUEN	20-02-1977	HKG
33	GK	LIANG YUHAO	03-03-1993	HKG
2	DF	JOSH MITCHELL	08-06-1984	AUS
6	DF	WONG CHIN HUNG	02-03-1982	HKG
12	DF	TSANG CHI HAU	12-01-1990	HKG
13	DF	TSE MAN WING	05-01-1983	HKG
14	DF	CHENG KING HO	07-11-1989	HKG
15	DF	ROBERTO	28-05-1983	HKG
21	DF	TSANG KAM TO	21-06-1989	HKG
28	DF	WONG CHI CHUNG	11-10-1982	HKG
30	DF	WONG TSZ HO	07-03-1994	HKG
35	DF	NG WAI CHIU	22-10-1981	HKG
3	MF	DIEGO ELI MOREIRA	04-09-1988	BRA
4	MF	BAI HE	19-11-1983	HKG
7	MF	XU DESHUAI	13-07-1987	HKG
17	MF	LEE HONG LIM	29-09-1983	HKG
18	MF	LI KA CHUN	10-09-1993	HKG
24	MF	JU YINGZHI	24-07-1987	HKG
29	MF	LEUNG CHUNG PONG	01-10-1986	HKG
9	FW	MANUEL BLEDA	31-07-1990	ESP
19	FW	CHENG SIU WAI	27-12-1981	HKG
23	FW	JAIMES MCKEE	14-04-1987	HKG



Club Profile

Established in 1932, Eastern Sports Club enjoyed much success in the 1990s when they won three straight Hong Kong league titles. They fell on hard times after that golden era but following three seasons in the third division, back-to-back promotions saw them return to the top flight in 2013.

They were runners-up in the Hong Kong Premier League in 2015 but under coach Chan Yuen-ting, they secured their first league title in 20 years the following season and earned a spot in the AFC Champions League for the first time.



Head Coach

Chan Yuen Ting

Chan Yuen Ting shot to international fame when she steered Eastern SC to the Hong Kong Premier League championship last year, becoming the first female coach to win a title in a professional men's league anywhere in the world. A former Hong Kong international who started her career in coaching as a data analyst with PSW Pegasus, the 28-year-old took over as Eastern's head coach at the start of the 2015-16 season and also won the Senior Challenge Cup with the club. Chan finished 2016 being named the Asian Football Confederation's Women's Coach of the Year.

Group G

Guangzhou Evergrande (CHN)



SHIRT NO.	POSITION	NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	NATIONALITY
13	GK	FANG JINGQI	17-01-1993	CHN
19	GK	ZENG CHENG	08-01-1987	CHN
32	GK	LIU DIANZUO	26-06-1990	CHN
39	GK	ZHAO TIANCI	20-03-1995	CHN
40	GK	WU YUDUO	03-05-1995	CHN
3	DF	MEI FANG	14-11-1989	CHN
5	DF	ZHANG LINPENG	09-05-1989	CHN
6	DF	FENG XIAOTING	22-10-1985	CHN
12	DF	WANG SHANGYUAN	02-06-1993	CHN
14	DF	RONG HAO	07-04-1987	CHN
21	DF	ZHANG CHENGLIN	20-01-1987	CHN
23	DF	KIM HYUNG-IL	27-04-1984	KOR
31	DF	LIU SHIBO	20-05-1997	CHN
35	DF	LI XUEPENG	18-09-1988	CHN
37	DF	CHEN ZEPENG	18-05-1996	CHN
38	DF	WEN JIABAO	02-01-1999	CHN
2	MF	LIAO LISHENG	29-04-1993	CHN
4	MF	XU XIN	19-04-1994	CHN
8	MF	PAULINHO	25-07-1988	BRA
10	MF	ZHENG ZHI	20-08-1980	CHN
16	MF	HUANG BOWEN	13-07-1987	CHN
17	MF	LIU JIAN	20-01-1985	CHN
25	MF	ZOU ZHENG	07-02-1988	CHN
26	MF	WANG JINGBIN	09-05-1995	CHN
27	MF	ZHENG LONG	15-04-1988	CHN
7	FW	ALAN	10-07-1989	BRA
11	FW	RICARDO GOULART	05-06-1991	BRA
15	FW	ZHANG WENZHAO	28-05-1987	CHN
20	FW	YU HANCHAO	25-02-1987	CHN
29	FW	GAO LIN	14-02-1986	CHN



Club Profile

Two-time AFC Champions League winners Guangzhou Evergrande FC make their sixth consecutive appearance in the competition after clinching their sixth straight Chinese Super League title in 2016 and completing the domestic double with victory over Jiangsu FC in the Chinese FA Cup final.

The club from southern China have been a force in Asian football in recent years, winning continental titles in 2013 and 2015, but they struggled in last year's tournament and failed to get past the group stage for the first time in five attempts.



Head Coach

Luiz Felipe Scolari

After an unremarkable playing career, Luiz Felipe Scolari has found great success as a coach, leading Brazil to their fifth FIFA World Cup title in 2002, taking Portugal to the final of Euro 2004 and winning the AFC Champions League with Guangzhou Evergrande in 2015. In his 34 years of coaching, the Brazilian has also won Copa Libertadores titles with Gremio in 1995 and Palmeiras in 1999 and he took charge of teams in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Japan, England and Uzbekistan before accepting the Guangzhou Evergrande job in June 2015 following the departure of Fabio Cannavaro. He led Guangzhou to a record sixth straight Chinese Super League title last season.

Group G

Kawasaki Frontale (JPN)



SHIRT NO.	POSITION	NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	NATIONALITY
1	GK	JUNG SUNG-RYONG	04-01-1985	KOR
24	GK	SHUNSUKE ANDO	10-08-1990	JPN
30	GK	SHOTA ARAI	01-11-1988	JPN
31	GK	WILLIAM POPP	21-10-1994	JPN
2	DF	KYOHEI NOBORIZATO	13-11-1990	JPN
3	DF	TATSUKI NARA	19-09-1993	JPN
4	DF	YUSUKE IGAWA	30-10-1982	JPN
7	DF	SHINTARO KURAYAMA	05-04-1992	JPN
17	DF	YUTO TAKEOKA	24-06-1986	JPN
18	DF	ELSINHO	30-11-1989	BRA
28	DF	KOU ITAKURA	27-01-1997	JPN
29	DF	MICHAEL FITZGERALD	17-09-1998	JPN
5	MF	SHOGO TANIGUCHI	15-07-1991	JPN
6	MF	YUSUKE TASAKA	08-07-1985	JPN
8	MF	HIROYUKI ABE	05-07-1989	JPN
10	MF	RYOTA OHSHIMA	23-01-1993	JPN
13	MF	KOJI MIYOSHI	26-03-1997	JPN
14	MF	KENGO NAKAMURA	31-10-1980	JPN
16	MF	TATSUYA HASEGAWA	07-03-1994	JPN
19	MF	KENTARO MORIYA	21-09-1988	JPN
21	MF	EDUARDO NETO	24-10-1988	BRA
25	MF	KENTA KANO	02-05-1986	JPN
32	MF	AO TANAKA	10-09-1998	JPN
41	MF	AKIHIRO IENAGA	13-06-1986	JPN
9	FW	TAKAYUKI MORIMOTO	07-05-1988	JPN
11	FW	YU KOBAYASHI	23-09-1987	JPN
20	FW	KEI CHINEN	17-03-1995	JPN
22	FW	RHAYNER	05-09-1990	BRA
27	FW	SHOHEI OTSUKA	11-04-1990	JPN



Club Profile

Kawasaki Frontale secured qualification for the AFC Champions League after a series of near-misses in 2016. They finished with the second-best overall record in the J1 League, missed the championship final after losing 1-0 in the semi-finals to Kashima Antlers, who then compounded their agony by beating them 2-1 after extra-time in the Emperor's Cup final.

Kawasaki have appeared in the AFC Champions League on four previous occasions and reached the quarter-finals in 2007 and 2009, and the round of 16 in 2014.



Head Coach

Toru Oniki

Toru Oniki took over as head coach at Kawasaki Frontale ahead of the current season following the defection to Nagoya Grampus Eight of former boss Yahira Kazama, who steered the club into the AFC Champions League with a third-place finish in the J1 League. The 42-year-old – Oniki turns 43 on April 20 – has been promoted from the position of assistant coach, a position he held at the club since 2010. Oniki will be taking on his first role as a head coach having served the club for eight seasons as a player, including one on loan, after starting his career with Kashima Antlers.

Group G

Suwon Samsung Bluewings (KOR)



SHIRT NO.	POSITION	NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	NATIONALITY
1	GK	SHIN HWA-YONG	13-04-1983	KOR
21	GK	YANG HYUNG-MO	16-07-1991	KOR
41	GK	KANG BONG-GYUN	06-07-1993	KOR
3	DF	YANG SANG-MIN	24-02-1984	KOR
6	DF	MATTHEW JURMAN	08-12-1989	AUS
15	DF	KU JA-RYONG	06-04-1992	KOR
25	DF	CHOI SUNG-GUEN	28-07-1991	KOR
32	DF	JANG HOIK	04-12-1993	KOR
39	DF	MIN SANG-GI	27-08-1991	KOR
40	DF	LEE JUNG-SOO	08-01-1980	KOR
4	MF	LEE YONG-RAE	17-04-1986	KOR
8	MF	CHO WON-HEE	17-04-1983	KOR
10	MF	SANTOS	25-12-1985	BRA
11	MF	KIM MIN-WOO	25-02-1990	KOR
12	MF	KO CHA-WON	30-04-1986	KOR
13	MF	SEO JUNG-JIN	06-09-1989	KOR
16	MF	LEE JONG-SUNG	05-08-1992	KOR
17	MF	KIM JONG-WOO	01-10-1993	KOR
19	MF	JANG HYUN-SOO	01-01-1993	KOR
20	MF	KWAK KWANG-SUN	28-03-1986	KOR
22	MF	KO SEUNG-BEOM	24-04-1994	KOR
26	MF	YEOM KI-HUN	30-03-1983	KOR
27	MF	EUN SEONG-SOO	22-06-1993	KOR
66	MF	DAMIR SOVSIC	05-02-1990	CRO
70	MF	JOO HYUN-HO	01-03-1996	KOR
88	MF	KIM JOON-HYUNG	05-04-1996	KOR
7	FW	JOHNATHAN	29-03-1990	BRA
9	FW	PARK DI-GONG	01-11-1998	KOR
14	FW	KIM GUN-HEE	22-02-1995	KOR
18	FW	KIM JONG-MIN	11-08-1992	KOR



Club Profile

Suwon Samsung Bluewings had a disappointing K League Classic campaign in 2016 as they finished in the bottom half of the table. However, they qualified for the AFC Champions League for the eighth time by winning the Korean FA Cup, overcoming FC Seoul in the final after an epic penalty shootout which went 10 rounds.

Winners of the Asian Club Championship in 2001 and 2002, Suwon reached the semi-finals of the continental tournament in 2011 but bowed out at the group stage last year.



Head Coach

Seo Jung-won

Having lifted the Asian Club Championship as captain of Suwon Samsung Bluewings in 2002, Seo Jung-won is looking to accomplish something similar as head coach of the K League Classic club in the AFC Champions League. The former Korea Republic international forward was an assistant coach with the Korea Republic U23 and senior international sides before he returned to Suwon as an assistant coach in 2012. The 46-year-old was elevated to his current position following the resignation of Yoon Sung-hyo after the 2012 K League season.

Group H

Adelaide United FC (AUS)



SHIRT NO.	POSITION	NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	NATIONALITY
1	GK	EUGENE GALEKOVIC	12-06-1981	AUS
20	GK	JOHN HALL	23-10-1994	AUS
30	GK	DANIEL MARGUSH	28-11-1997	AUS
2	DF	MICHAEL MARRONE	27-01-1987	AUS
4	DF	DYLAN MCGOWAN	06-08-1991	AUS
5	DF	TAYLOR REGAN	16-11-1988	AUS
12	DF	MARK OCHIENG	09-12-1996	AUS
15	DF	BEN WARLAND	04-09-1996	AUS
19	DF	BEN GARUCCIO	15-06-1995	AUS
21	DF	TAREK ELRICH	01-01-1987	AUS
32	DF	PAUL WILSON	08-08-1992	AUS
7	MF	KIM JAE-SUNG	03-10-1983	KOR
8	MF	ISAIAS	09-02-1987	ESP
14	MF	GEORGE MELLS	23-05-1997	AUS
16	MF	JESSE MAKAROUNAS	18-04-1994	AUS
17	MF	NIKOLA MILEUSNIC	17-07-1993	AUS
18	MF	RILEY MCGREE	02-11-1998	AUS
22	MF	RYAN KITTO	09-08-1994	AUS
24	MF	JORDAN O'DOHERTY	14-10-1997	AUS
26	MF	LACHLAN BROOK	08-02-2000	AUS
27	MF	JOSHUA MORI	01-04-1997	AUS
28	MF	RYAN YATES	05-02-2000	AUS
29	MF	RYAN STRAIN	02-04-1997	AUS
9	FW	PAPA BABACAR DIAWARA	05-01-1988	SEN
11	FW	SERGIO CIRIO	09-03-1985	ESP
13	FW	MARC MARINO	30-04-1996	AUS
31	FW	ALEC MAIOLO	08-04-1998	AUS
92	FW	ELI BABALJ	21-02-1992	AUS



Club Profile

Adelaide United are appearing in the AFC Champions League group stage for the first time since 2012 after a successful 2015-16 campaign in which they topped the regular season standings before beating Western Sydney Wanderers 3-1 in the Grand Final to be crowned A-League champions for the first time.

The Reds became the first Australian club to reach an AFC Champions League final in 2008 when they finished runners-up to Japan's Gamba Osaka but they were eliminated by Shandong Luneng of China in the playoffs last year.



Head Coach

Guillermo Amor

Former Barcelona midfielder Guillermo Amor won the A-League title in his first season in charge of Adelaide United after taking over the reins of the club following Josep Gombau's decision to stand down due to family reasons. Amor, who had worked alongside Gombau as his assistant, took the club on a lengthy unbeaten run as Adelaide secured their first title since 2005-06 and Amor was named A-League Coach of the Year. The 49-year-old won the European Cup with Barcelona in 1992 as well as five La Liga titles and three Copa del Rey crowns as well as representing Spain at the 1998 FIFA World Cup finals.

Group H

Gamba Osaka (JPN)



SHIRT NO.	POSITION	NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	NATIONALITY
1	GK	MASAAKI HIGASHIGUCHI	12-05-1986	JPN
16	GK	KEN TAJIRI	11-06-1993	JPN
18	GK	YOSUKE FUJIGAYA	13-02-1981	JPN
19	GK	RYOTA SUZUKI	10-02-1994	JPN
2	DF	GENTA MIURA	01-03-1995	JPN
3	DF	FABIO	28-02-1989	BRA
4	DF	HIROKI FUJIHARU	28-11-1988	JPN
5	DF	DAIKI NIWA	16-01-1986	JPN
6	DF	KIM JUNG-YA	17-05-1988	KOR
14	DF	KOKI YONEKURA	17-05-1988	JPN
22	DF	OH JAE-SUK	04-01-1990	KOR
32	DF	HIROKI NODA	27-07-1997	JPN
35	DF	RYO HATSUSE	10-07-1997	JPN
7	MF	YASUHITO ENDO	28-01-1980	JPN
8	MF	YOSUKE IDEGUCHI	23-08-1996	JPN
10	MF	SHU KURATA	26-11-1988	JPN
15	MF	YASUYUKI KONNO	25-01-1983	JPN
24	MF	HARUYA IDE	25-03-1994	JPN
25	MF	JUNGO FUJIMOTO	24-03-1984	JPN
28	MF	SHOTA YOMESAKA	19-10-1996	JPN
36	MF	MIZUKI ICHIMARU	08-05-1997	JPN
38	MF	RITSU DOAN	16-06-1998	JPN
39	MF	JIN IZUMISAWA	17-12-1991	JPN
40	MF	RYOTA MESHINO	18-06-1998	JPN
9	FW	ADEMILSON	09-01-1994	BRA
13	FW	HIROTO GOYA	02-01-1994	JPN
20	FW	SHUN NAGASAWA	25-08-1988	JPN
26	FW	NAOYA SENOO	15-08-1996	JPN
30	FW	SO HIRAO	01-07-1996	JPN
37	FW	AKITO TAKAGI	04-08-1997	JPN



Club Profile

Following a slow start to the 2016 J1 League season, Gamba Osaka's form improved in the second half of the campaign as they finished in fourth place overall and qualified for the AFC Champions League play-offs where a 3-0 victory over Malaysia's Johor Darul Ta'zim sent them into the group stage for the ninth time.

They beat Adelaide United of Australia to win the AFC Champions League in 2008 and reached the semi-finals in 2015 but went winless last year and failed to progress past the group stage.



Head Coach

Kenta Hasegawa

A former Japan international winger, Kenta Hasegawa became head coach of Gamba Osaka in 2013 after a five-year spell with former club Shimizu S-Pulse and led his new side to back-to-back first-place finishes as they achieved promotion from J.League Division 2 in 2013 before being crowned top-flight champions the following year. He also oversaw J.League Cup and Emperor's Cup triumphs as Gamba became only the second team to secure the Japanese treble. The 51-year-old led Gamba to the AFC Champions League semi-finals in 2015 and enjoyed further success as the club retained the Emperor's Cup.

Group H

Jeju United FC (KOR)



SHIRT NO.	POSITION	NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	NATIONALITY
1	GK	KIM HO-JUN	21-06-1984	KOR
21	GK	LEE CHANG-GUEN	30-08-1993	KOR
25	GK	LEE KI-HYUN	16-12-1993	KOR
2	DF	KIM SANG-WON	20-02-1992	KOR
3	DF	BAEK DONG-GYU	30-05-1991	KOR
4	DF	OH BAN-SUK	20-05-1988	KOR
5	DF	KWEON HAN-JIN	19-05-1988	KOR
6	DF	PARK JIN-PO	13-08-1987	KOR
8	DF	ALEKSANDAR JOVANOVIC	04-08-1989	AUS
13	DF	CHUNG WOON	30-06-1989	KOR
18	DF	BAE JAE-WOO	17-05-1993	KOR
20	DF	CHO YUNG-HYUNG	03-11-1983	KOR
23	DF	KIM SOO-BEOM	02-10-1990	KOR
37	DF	KIM WON-IL	18-10-1986	KOR
7	MF	KWON SOON-HYUNG	16-06-1986	KOR
14	MF	LEE CHANG-MIN	20-01-1994	KOR
15	MF	KIM SUN-WOO	19-04-1993	KOR
24	MF	MOON SANG-YUN	19-01-1991	KOR
26	MF	LEE DONG-SU	03-06-1994	KOR
40	MF	LEE CHAN-DONG	10-01-1993	KOR
44	MF	JWA JOON-HYUB	07-05-1991	KOR
9	FW	JIN SEONG-UK	16-12-1993	KOR
10	FW	MARCELO TOSCANO	12-05-1985	BRA
11	FW	HWANG IL-SU	08-08-1987	KOR
17	FW	AHN JAE-WOO	21-12-1994	KOR
22	FW	MAGNO CRUZ	20-05-1988	BRA
30	FW	KIM HYEON-UG	22-06-1995	KOR
32	FW	KWON YONG-HYUN	23-10-1991	KOR
47	FW	LEE EUN-BUM	30-01-1996	KOR
88	FW	FREDERIC MENDY	18-09-1988	FRA



Club Profile

Jeju United FC finished third in the K League Classic in 2016, their best performance in the Korea Republic top flight since they were runners-up in 2010. They were slated to play in the AFC Champions League playoffs in February but following the exclusion of K League runners-up Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors, they were given a direct berth in the group stage.

Formed originally in 1982 as Yukong Elephants, Jeju made their only previous appearance in the AFC Champions League in 2011 when they were eliminated at the group stage.



Head Coach

Jo Sung-hwan

Jo Sung-hwan has had a long association with Jeju United FC in the club's many incarnations, serving as a player during their days as Yukong Elephants and Bucheon SK in the 1990s and 2000s before closing out his playing career with Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors. It was with Jeonbuk that the 46-year-old former defender took his first steps into coaching before a return to his original club in 2013, working as an assistant coach with Jeju United (the club relocated to Jeju in 2006) before taking over as head coach in 2015. They were sixth in his first season in charge before finishing third last year to qualify for the AFC Champions League.

Group H

Jiangsu FC (CHN)



SHIRT NO.	POSITION	NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	NATIONALITY
1	GK	GU CHAO	20-08-1989	CHN
23	GK	LI HAITAO	29-11-1995	CHN
25	GK	JIANG HAO	28-12-1989	CHN
30	GK	ZHANG SIPENG	14-05-1987	CHN
2	DF	LI ANG	15-09-1993	CHN
5	DF	ZHOU YUN	31-12-1990	CHN
18	DF	LIU WEI	07-01-1993	CHN
24	DF	JI XIANG	01-03-1990	CHN
26	DF	HONG JEONG-HO	12-08-1989	KOR
39	DF	YANG BOYU	24-06-1989	CHN
7	MF	RAMIRES	24-03-1987	BRA
8	MF	LIU JIANYE	17-06-1987	CHN
11	MF	XIE PENGFEI	29-06-1993	CHN
12	MF	ZHANG XIAOBIN	23-10-1993	CHN
13	MF	TAO YUAN	18-01-1993	CHN
15	MF	CAO KANG	08-01-1993	CHN
16	MF	GAO TIANYI	01-07-1998	CHN
20	MF	ZHANG XINLIN	04-06-1992	CHN
22	MF	WU XI	19-02-1989	CHN
27	MF	YANG JIAWEI	04-01-1992	CHN
28	MF	YANG XIAOTIAN	26-03-1990	CHN
29	MF	CHEN JI	05-01-1997	CHN
33	MF	GU WENXIANG	08-02-1991	CHN
34	MF	CAO WEN	08-02-1997	CHN
43	MF	TENG SHUAI	12-02-1993	CHN
9	FW	ROGER MARTINEZ	23-06-1994	COL
10	FW	ALEX TEIXEIRA	06-01-1990	BRA
40	FW	GE WEI	09-09-1989	CHN



Club Profile

Jiangsu FC were the bridesmaids of Chinese football in the 2016 season as they finished runners-up to Guangzhou Evergrande in the Chinese Super League before losing narrowly on away goals to the league champions in the Chinese FA Cup final.

The Nanjing-based club's second place matched their best-ever performance in the Chinese league and earned them a spot in the AFC Champions League where they are looking to improve on their previous performances in 2013 and 2016 when they went out at the group stage.



Head Coach

Choi Yong-soo

(resigned at the end of May after Jiangsu were eliminated)

Choi Yong-soo landed the K League championship with FC Seoul in his first full season in charge in 2012 and led the team to success in the Korean FA Cup in 2015, before leaving the club midway through last season to join Jiangsu FC. A hard working and prolific striker during his playing days, Choi began his professional career at Anyang Cheetahs (now FC Seoul) and played for Japanese clubs JEF United Chiba, Kyoto Purple Sanga and Jubilo Iwata before retiring as an FC Seoul player in 2006. He also played for Korea Republic at the 1998 and 2002 FIFA World Cups and the 1996 Olympics.





COMPETITION RESULTS



COMPETITION RESULTS

PRELIMINARY ROUND

Date	Zone	Team A	Score	Team B
24 Jan, 2017	EAST	GLOBAL FC (PHI)	2-0 (0-0)	TAMPINES ROVERS FC (SIN) N
25 Jan, 2017	EAST	KITCHEE SC (HKG)	3-2 a.e.t. (1-1,0-0)	HANOI FC (VIE)
31 Jan, 2017	WEST	FC NASAF (UZB)	4-0 (2-0)	AL HIDD CLUB (BHR)
31 Jan, 2017	WEST	AL WEHDAT (JOR)	2-1 (0-0)	JSW BENGALURU FC (IND)
31 Jan, 2017	EAST	BANGKOK UNITED (THA)	1-1 a.e.t. (0-0,0-0) 4-5 PSO	JOHOR DARUL TA'ZIM (MAS)
31 Jan, 2017	EAST	SUKHOTHAI FC (THA)	5-0 (2-0)	YADANARBON FC (MYA)
31 Jan, 2017	EAST	BRISBANE ROAR (AUS)	6-0 (4-0)	GLOBAL FC (PHI)



PLAYOFFS (EAST)

Date	Team A	Score	Team B
07 Feb, 2017	ULSAN HYUNDAI FC (KOR)	1-1 a.e.t. (1-1,1-0)4-3 PSO	KITCHEE SC (HKG)
07 Feb, 2017	GAMBA OSAKA (JPN)	3-0 (2-0)	JOHOR DARUL TA'ZIM (MAS)
07 Feb, 2017	SHANGHAI SIPG FC (CHN)	3-0 (2-0)	SUKHOTHAI FC (THA)
08 Feb, 2017	SHANGHAI SHENHUA FC (CHN)	0-2 (0-2)	BRISBANE ROAR (AUS)

PLAYOFFS (WEST)

Date	Team A	Score	Team B
07 Feb, 2017	AL WAHDA (UAE)	3-0 (2-0)	AL WEHDAT (JOR)
07 Feb, 2017	AL FATEH FC (KSA)	1-0 (1-0)	FC NASAF (UZB)
07 Feb, 2017	ESTEGHLAL FC (IRN)	0-0 a.e.t. (0-0,0-0)4-3 PSO	AL SADD SC (QAT)
07 Feb, 2017	EL JAISH SC (QAT)	0-0 a.e.t. (0-0,0-0)1-3 PSO	FC BUNYODKOR (UZB)

GROUP STAGE

GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
AL AHLI FC (UAE) *	6	3	2	1	10	5	5	11
ESTEGHLAL FC (IRN) *	6	3	2	1	10	5	5	11
AL TAAWOUN FC (KSA) *	6	1	2	3	7	12	-5	5
PFC LOKOMOTIV (UZB) *	6	1	2	3	7	12	-5	5

Date	Team A	Score	Team B
20 Feb, 2017	AL TAAWOUN FC (KSA)	1-0 (0-0)	PFC LOKOMOTIV (UZB)
20 Feb, 2017	AL AHLI FC (UAE)	2-1 (1-0)	ESTEGHLAL FC (IRN)
27 Feb, 2017	PFC LOKOMOTIV (UZB)	2-0 (1-0)	AL AHLI FC (UAE)
27 Feb, 2017	ESTEGHLAL FC (IRN)	3-0 (1-0)	AL TAAWOUN FC (KSA)
13 Mar, 2017	ESTEGHLAL FC (IRN)	2-0 (1-0)	PFC LOKOMOTIV (UZB)
13 Mar, 2017	AL AHLI FC (UAE)	0-0 (0-0)	AL TAAWOUN FC (KSA)
11 Apr, 2017	PFC LOKOMOTIV (UZB)	1-1 (1-0)	ESTEGHLAL FC (IRN)
11 Apr, 2017	AL TAAWOUN FC (KSA)	1-3 (0-2)	AL AHLI FC (UAE)
25 Apr, 2017	PFC LOKOMOTIV (UZB)	4-4 (2-1)	AL TAAWOUN FC (KSA)
25 Apr, 2017	ESTEGHLAL FC (IRN)	1-1 (0-1)	AL AHLI FC (UAE)
09 May, 2017	AL TAAWOUN FC (KSA)	1-2 (1-1)	ESTEGHLAL FC (IRN)
09 May, 2017	AL AHLI FC (UAE)	4-0 (1-0)	PFC LOKOMOTIV (UZB)

* The standing table is base on points, goal-difference and number of goals of the teams tied

GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
LEKHWIYA SC (QAT)	6	4	2	0	15	6	9	14
ESTEGHLAL KHOUZESTAN FC (IRN)	6	2	3	1	6	5	1	9
AL FATEH FC (KSA)	6	1	3	2	7	9	-2	6
AL JAZIRA (UAE)	6	0	2	4	3	11	-8	2

Date	Team A	Score	Team B
20 Feb, 2017	ESTEGHLAL KHOUZESTAN FC (IRN)	1-0 (0-0)	AL FATEH FC (KSA)
20 Feb, 2017	LEKHWIYA SC (QAT)	3-0 (1-0)	AL JAZIRA (UAE)
27 Feb, 2017	AL FATEH FC (KSA)	2-2 (1-1)	LEKHWIYA SC (QAT)
27 Feb, 2017	AL JAZIRA (UAE)	0-1 (0-1)	ESTEGHLAL KHOUZESTAN FC (IRN)
14 Mar, 2017	ESTEGHLAL KHOUZESTAN FC (IRN)	1-1 (1-1)	LEKHWIYA SC (QAT)
14 Mar, 2017	AL FATEH FC (KSA)	3-1 (2-1)	AL JAZIRA (UAE)
10 Apr, 2017	LEKHWIYA SC (QAT)	2-1 (2-1)	ESTEGHLAL KHOUZESTAN FC (IRN)
10 Apr, 2017	AL JAZIRA (UAE)	0-0 (0-0)	AL FATEH FC (KSA)
25 Apr, 2017	AL FATEH FC (KSA)	1-1 (0-0)	ESTEGHLAL KHOUZESTAN FC (IRN)
25 Apr, 2017	AL JAZIRA (UAE)	1-3 (1-1)	LEKHWIYA SC (QAT)
09 May, 2017	LEKHWIYA SC (QAT)	4-1 (4-0)	AL FATEH FC (KSA)
09 May, 2017	ESTEGHLAL KHOUZESTAN FC (IRN)	1-1 (0-1)	AL JAZIRA (UAE)

GROUP C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
AL AIN (UAE)	6	3	3	0	14	7	7	12
AL AHLI SAUDI FC (KSA)	6	3	2	1	10	7	3	11
ZOBAHAN FC (IRN)	6	2	1	3	6	9	-3	7
FC BUNYODKOR (UZB)	6	1	0	5	5	12	-7	3

Date	Team A	Score	Team B
21 Feb, 2017	AL AIN (UAE)	1-1 (0-0)	ZOBAHAN FC (IRN)
21 Feb, 2017	AL AHLI SAUDI FC (KSA)	2-0 (1-0)	FC BUNYODKOR (UZB)
28 Feb, 2017	FC BUNYODKOR (UZB)	2-3 (2-2)	AL AIN (UAE)
28 Feb, 2017	ZOBAHAN FC (IRN)	1-2 (1-1)	AL AHLI SAUDI FC (KSA)
13 Mar, 2017	FC BUNYODKOR (UZB)	0-2 (0-0)	ZOBAHAN FC (IRN)
13 Mar, 2017	AL AHLI SAUDI FC (KSA)	2-2 (1-1)	AL AIN (UAE)
11 Apr, 2017	AL AIN (UAE)	2-2 (1-1)	AL AHLI SAUDI FC (KSA)
11 Apr, 2017	ZOBAHAN FC (IRN)	2-1 (1-0)	FC BUNYODKOR (UZB)
24 Apr, 2017	FC BUNYODKOR (UZB)	2-0 (1-0)	AL AHLI SAUDI FC (KSA)
24 Apr, 2017	ZOBAHAN FC (IRN)	0-3 (0-1)	AL AIN (UAE)
08 May, 2017	AL AHLI SAUDI FC (KSA)	2-0 (0-0)	ZOBAHAN FC (IRN)
08 May, 2017	AL AIN (UAE)	3-0 (1-0)	FC BUNYODKOR (UZB)

GROUP D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
AL HILAL SFC (KSA)	6	3	3	0	10	7	3	12
PERSEPOLIS FC (IRN)	6	2	3	1	9	8	1	9
AL RAYYAN SC (QAT)	6	2	1	3	10	13	-3	7
AL WAHDA (UAE)	6	1	1	4	12	13	-1	4

Date	Team A	Score	Team B
21 Feb,17	AL RAYYAN SC (QAT)	2-1 (1-1)	AL WAHDA (UAE)
21 Feb,17	PERSEPOLIS FC (IRN)	1-1 (0-0)	AL HILAL SFC (KSA)
28 Feb,17	AL WAHDA (UAE)	2-3 (0-1)	PERSEPOLIS FC (IRN)
28 Feb,17	AL HILAL SFC (KSA)	2-1 (1-0)	AL RAYYAN SC (QAT)
14 Mar,17	AL RAYYAN SC (QAT)	3-1 (1-1)	PERSEPOLIS FC (IRN)
14 Mar,17	AL WAHDA (UAE)	2-2 (1-1)	AL HILAL SFC (KSA)
10 Apr,17	PERSEPOLIS FC (IRN)	0-0 (0-0)	AL RAYYAN SC (QAT)
10 Apr,17	AL HILAL SFC (KSA)	1-0 (1-0)	AL WAHDA (UAE)
24 Apr,17	AL HILAL SFC (KSA)	0-0 (0-0)	PERSEPOLIS FC (IRN)
24 Apr,17	AL WAHDA (UAE)	5-1 (2-1)	AL RAYYAN SC (QAT)
08 May,17	AL RAYYAN SC (QAT)	3-4 (0-1)	AL HILAL SFC (KSA)
08 May,17	PERSEPOLIS FC (IRN)	4-2 (2-1)	AL WAHDA (UAE)

GROUP E

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
KASHIMA ANTLERS (JPN)	6	4	0	2	13	5	8	12
MUANGTHONG UNITED (THA)	6	3	2	1	7	3	4	11
ULSAN HYUNDAI FC (KOR)	6	2	1	3	9	9	0	7
BRISBANE ROAR (AUS)	6	1	1	4	4	16	-12	4

Date	Team A	Score	Team B
21 Feb, 2017	KASHIMA ANTLERS (JPN)	2-0 (0-0)	ULSAN HYUNDAI FC (KOR)
21 Feb, 2017	BRISBANE ROAR (AUS)	0-0 (0-0)	MUANGTHONG UNITED (THA)
28 Feb, 2017	ULSAN HYUNDAI FC (KOR)	6-0 (3-0)	BRISBANE ROAR (AUS)
28 Feb, 2017	MUANGTHONG UNITED (THA)	2-1 (1-0)	KASHIMA ANTLERS (JPN)
14 Mar, 2017	KASHIMA ANTLERS (JPN)	3-0 (1-0)	BRISBANE ROAR (AUS)
14 Mar, 2017	ULSAN HYUNDAI FC (KOR)	0-0 (0-0)	MUANGTHONG UNITED (THA)
12 Apr, 2017	BRISBANE ROAR (AUS)	2-1 (1-0)	KASHIMA ANTLERS (JPN)
12 Apr, 2017	MUANGTHONG UNITED (THA)	1-0 (1-0)	ULSAN HYUNDAI FC (KOR)
26 Apr, 2017	ULSAN HYUNDAI FC (KOR)	0-4 (0-0)	KASHIMA ANTLERS (JPN)
26 Apr, 2017	MUANGTHONG UNITED (THA)	3-0 (1-0)	BRISBANE ROAR (AUS)
10 May, 2017	KASHIMA ANTLERS (JPN)	2-1 (1-1)	MUANGTHONG UNITED (THA)
10 May, 2017	BRISBANE ROAR (AUS)	2-3 (2-1)	ULSAN HYUNDAI FC (KOR)

GROUP F

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
URAWA RED DIAMONDS (JPN)	6	4	0	2	18	7	11	12
SHANGHAI SIPG FC (CHN)	6	4	0	2	15	9	6	12
FC SEOUL (KOR)	6	2	0	4	10	15	-5	6
WESTERN SYDNEY WANDERERS (AUS)	6	2	0	4	10	22	-12	6

Date	Team A	Score	Team B
21 Feb, 2017	WESTERN SYDNEY WANDERERS (AUS)	0-4 (0-0)	URAWA RED DIAMONDS (JPN)
21 Feb, 2017	FC SEOUL (KOR)	0-1 (0-0)	SHANGHAI SIPG FC (CHN)
28 Feb, 2017	SHANGHAI SIPG FC (CHN)	5-1 (4-1)	WESTERN SYDNEY WANDERERS (AUS)
28 Feb, 2017	URAWA RED DIAMONDS (JPN)	5-2 (5-1)	FC SEOUL (KOR)
15 Mar, 2017	SHANGHAI SIPG FC (CHN)	3-2 (2-0)	URAWA RED DIAMONDS (JPN)
15 Mar, 2017	FC SEOUL (KOR)	2-3 (0-2)	WESTERN SYDNEY WANDERERS (AUS)
11 Apr, 2017	URAWA RED DIAMONDS (JPN)	1-0 (1-0)	SHANGHAI SIPG FC (CHN)
11 Apr, 2017	WESTERN SYDNEY WANDERERS (AUS)	2-3 (0-2)	FC SEOUL (KOR)
26 Apr, 2017	SHANGHAI SIPG FC (CHN)	4-2 (3-1)	FC SEOUL (KOR)
26 Apr, 2017	URAWA RED DIAMONDS (JPN)	6-1 (3-0)	WESTERN SYDNEY WANDERERS (AUS)
10 May, 2017	FC SEOUL (KOR)	1-0 (1-0)	URAWA RED DIAMONDS (JPN)
10 May, 2017	WESTERN SYDNEY WANDERERS (AUS)	3-2 (2-2)	SHANGHAI SIPG FC (CHN)

GROUP G

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
GUANGZHOU EVERGRANDE FC (CHN)	6	2	4	0	18	5	13	10
KAWASAKI FRONTALE (JPN)	6	2	4	0	8	3	5	10
SUWON SAMSUNG BLUEWINGS (KOR)	6	2	3	1	11	6	5	9
EASTERN SC (HKG)	6	0	1	5	1	24	-23	1

Date	Team A	Score	Team B
22 Feb,17	KAWASAKI FRONTALE (JPN)	1-1 (1-1)	SUWON SAMSUNG BLUEWINGS (KOR)
22 Feb,17	GUANGZHOU EVERGRANDE FC (CHN)	7-0 (3-0)	EASTERN SC (HKG)
01 Mar,17	SUWON SAMSUNG BLUEWINGS (KOR)	2-2 (2-1)	GUANGZHOU EVERGRANDE FC (CHN)
01 Mar,17	EASTERN SC (HKG)	1-1 (1-0)	KAWASAKI FRONTALE (JPN)
14 Mar,17	EASTERN SC (HKG)	0-1 (0-0)	SUWON SAMSUNG BLUEWINGS (KOR)
14 Mar,17	GUANGZHOU EVERGRANDE FC (CHN)	1-1 (1-0)	KAWASAKI FRONTALE (JPN)
12 Apr,17	SUWON SAMSUNG BLUEWINGS (KOR)	5-0 (1-0)	EASTERN SC (HKG)
12 Apr,17	KAWASAKI FRONTALE (JPN)	0-0 (0-0)	GUANGZHOU EVERGRANDE FC (CHN)
25 Apr,17	SUWON SAMSUNG BLUEWINGS (KOR)	0-1 (0-0)	KAWASAKI FRONTALE (JPN)
25 Apr,17	EASTERN SC (HKG)	0-6 (0-2)	GUANGZHOU EVERGRANDE FC (CHN)
09 May,17	GUANGZHOU EVERGRANDE FC (CHN)	2-2 (1-1)	SUWON SAMSUNG BLUEWINGS (KOR)
09 May,17	KAWASAKI FRONTALE (JPN)	4-0 (2-0)	EASTERN SC (HKG)

GROUP H

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
JIANGSU FC (CHN)	6	5	0	1	9	3	6	15
JEJU UNITED FC (KOR)	6	3	1	2	12	9	3	10
ADELAIDE UNITED (AUS)	6	1	2	3	10	13	-3	5
GAMBA OSAKA (JPN)	6	1	1	4	7	13	-6	4

Date	Team A	Score	Team B
22 Feb, 2017	ADELAIDE UNITED (AUS)	0-3 (0-2)	GAMBA OSAKA (JPN)
22 Feb, 2017	JEJU UNITED FC (KOR)	0-1 (0-0)	JIANGSU FC (CHN)
01 Mar, 2017	GAMBA OSAKA (JPN)	1-4 (0-2)	JEJU UNITED FC (KOR)
01 Mar, 2017	JIANGSU FC (CHN)	2-1 (1-0)	ADELAIDE UNITED (AUS)
15 Mar, 2017	GAMBA OSAKA (JPN)	0-1 (0-1)	JIANGSU FC (CHN)
15 Mar, 2017	ADELAIDE UNITED (AUS)	3-3 (0-0)	JEJU UNITED FC (KOR)
11 Apr, 2017	JIANGSU FC (CHN)	3-0 (3-0)	GAMBA OSAKA (JPN)
11 Apr, 2017	JEJU UNITED FC (KOR)	1-3 (1-1)	ADELAIDE UNITED (AUS)
25 Apr, 2017	GAMBA OSAKA (JPN)	3-3 (2-1)	ADELAIDE UNITED (AUS)
25 Apr, 2017	JIANGSU FC (CHN)	1-2 (1-1)	JEJU UNITED FC (KOR)
09 May, 2017	JEJU UNITED FC (KOR)	2-0 (1-0)	GAMBA OSAKA (JPN)
09 May, 2017	ADELAIDE UNITED (AUS)	0-1 (0-0)	JIANGSU FC (CHN)

KNOCK-OUT STAGE

ROUND OF 16

Date	Team A	Score	Team B
22 May, 2017	ESTEGHLAL FC (IRN)	1-0 (0-0)	AL AIN (UAE)
22 May, 2017	AL AHLI SAUDI FC (KSA)	1-1 (1-1)	AL AHLI FC (UAE)
23 May, 2017	PERSEPOLIS FC (IRN)	0-0 (0-0)	LEKHWIYA SC (QAT)
23 May, 2017	MUANGTHONG UNITED (THA)	1-3 (1-0)	KAWASAKI FRONTALE (JPN)
23 May, 2017	ESTEGHLAL KHOUZESTAN FC (IRN)	1-2 (1-0)	AL HILAL SFC (KSA)
23 May, 2017	GUANGZHOU EVERGRANDE FC (CHN)	1-0 (0-0)	KASHIMA ANTLERS (JPN)
24 May, 2017	JEJU UNITED FC (KOR)	2-0 (1-0)	URAWA RED DIAMONDS (JPN)
24 May, 2017	SHANGHAI SIPG FC (CHN)	2-1 (2-1)	JIANGSU FC (CHN)
29 May, 2017	AL AIN (UAE)	6-1 (2-0)	ESTEGHLAL FC (IRN)
29 May, 2017	AL AHLI FC (UAE)	1-3 (0-2)	AL AHLI SAUDI FC (KSA)
30 May, 2017	KAWASAKI FRONTALE (JPN)	4-1 (3-0)	MUANGTHONG UNITED (THA)
30 May, 2017	KASHIMA ANTLERS (JPN)	2-1 (1-0)	GUANGZHOU EVERGRANDE FC (CHN)
30 May, 2017	LEKHWIYA SC (QAT)	0-1 (0-1)	PERSEPOLIS FC (IRN)
30 May, 2017	AL HILAL SFC (KSA)	2-1 (1-1)	ESTEGHLAL KHOUZESTAN FC (IRN)
31 May, 2017	URAWA RED DIAMONDS (JPN)	3-0 a.e.t. (2-0,2-0)	JEJU UNITED FC (KOR)
31 May, 2017	JIANGSU FC (CHN)	2-3 (0-2)	SHANGHAI SIPG FC (CHN) (CHN)

QUARTER-FINALS

Date	Team A	Score	Team B
21 Aug, 2017	AL AIN (UAE)	0-0 (0-0)	AL HILAL SFC (KSA)
22 Aug, 2017	PERSEPOLIS FC (IRN)	2-2 (0-1)	AL AHLI SAUDI FC (KSA)
22 Aug, 2017	SHANGHAI SIPG FC (CHN)	4-0 (2-0)	GUANGZHOU EVERGRANDE FC (CHN)
23 Aug, 2017	KAWASAKI FRONTALE (JPN)	3-1 (1-0)	URAWA RED DIAMONDS (JPN)
11 Sep, 2017	AL HILAL SFC (KSA)	3-0 (2-0)	AL AIN (UAE)
12 Sep, 2017	AL AHLI SAUDI FC (KSA)	1-3 (0-1)	PERSEPOLIS FC (IRN)
12 Sep, 2017	GUANGZHOU EVERGRANDE FC (CHN)	5-1 a.e.t. (4-0,2-0)4-5 PSO	SHANGHAI SIPG FC (CHN)
13 Sep, 2017	URAWA RED DIAMONDS (JPN)	4-1 (1-1)	KAWASAKI FRONTALE (JPN)

SEMI-FINALS

Date	Team A	Score	Team B
26 Sep, 2017	AL HILAL SFC (KSA)	4-0 (2-0)	PERSEPOLIS FC (IRN)
27 Sep, 2017	SHANGHAI SIPG FC (CHN)	1-1 (1-1)	URAWA RED DIAMONDS (JPN)
17 Oct, 2017	PERSEPOLIS FC (IRN)	2-2 (1-1)	AL HILAL SFC (KSA)
18 Oct, 2017	URAWA RED DIAMONDS (JPN)	1-0 (1-0)	SHANGHAI SIPG FC (CHN)

FINAL

Date	Team A	Score	Team B
18 Nov, 2017	AL HILAL SFC (KSA)	1-1	URAWA RED DIAMONDS (JPN)
25 Nov, 2017	URAWA RED DIAMONDS (JPN)	1-0	AL HILAL SFC (KSA)



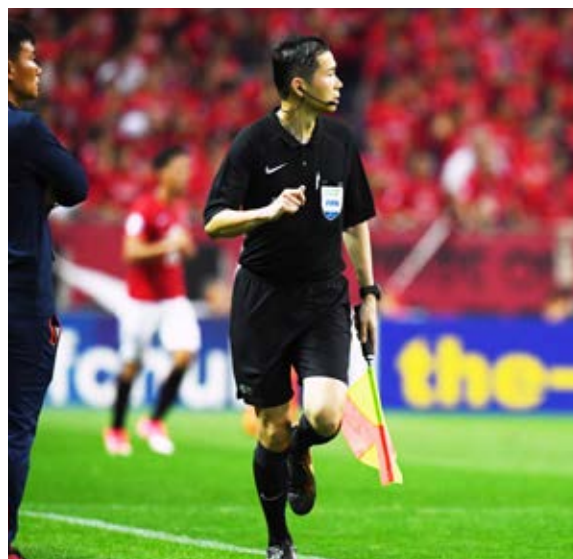


REFEREES



AFC Champions League 2017 Referees

NO.	NAME	MA
1	Green Peter Daniel	AUS
2	Beath Christopher James	AUS
3	Gillett Jarred Gavan	AUS
4	Muhammad Taqi Aljaafari Bin Jahari	SIN
5	Ma Ning	CHN
6	Fu Ming	CHN
7	Wang Di	CHN
8	Liu Kwok Man	HKG
9	Sato Ryuji	JPN
10	Tojo Minoru	JPN
11	Iida Jumpei	JPN
12	Kimura Hiroyuki	JPN
13	Kim Jong Hyeok	KOR
14	Ko Hyungjin	KOR
15	Kim Dongjin	KOR
16	Nawaf Abdulla Ghayyath Shukralla	BHR
17	Ali Hasan Ebrahim Abdulnabi Alsamaheji	BHR
18	Mohanad Qasim Eesee Sarray	IRQ
19	Ali Sabah Adday Al-Qaysi	IRQ
20	Adham Mohammad Tumah Makhadmeh	JOR
21	Al Kaf Ahmed Abu Bakar Said	OMA
22	Abdulrahman Ibrahim Y J Al-Jassim	QAT
23	Fahad Jaber A B Al-Marri	QAT
24	Khamis Mohammed S A Al-Marri	QAT
25	Almirdasi Fahad Adwan M	KSA
26	Alkudhayr, Turki Mohammed A	KSA
27	Mohammed Abdulla Hassan Mohammed	UAE
28	Ammar Ali Abdulla Jumaa Aljneibi	UAE
29	Arumughan Rowan	IND
30	Hettikankanamge Crishantha Dilan Perera	SRI
31	Gamini Nivon Robesh	SRI
32	Faghani Alireza Mohammad	IRN
33	Irmatov Ravshan	UZB
34	Kovalenko Valentin	UZB
35	Tantashev Ilgiz	UZB
36	Asimov Aziz	UZB









STAR SELECTION



THE ALL STAR SQUAD

Goalkeepers

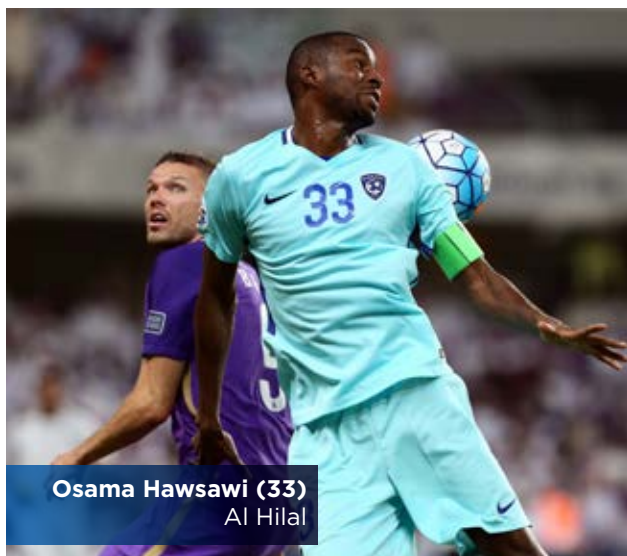


Abdullah Al-Mayouf (1)
Al Hilal

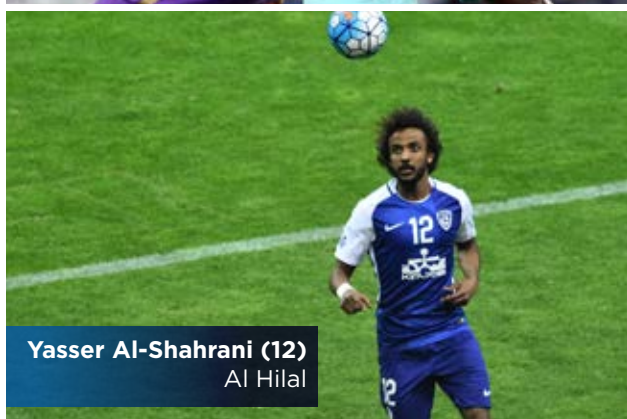


Shusaku Nishikawa (1)
Urawa Red Diamonds

Defenders



Osama Hawsawi (33)
Al Hilal



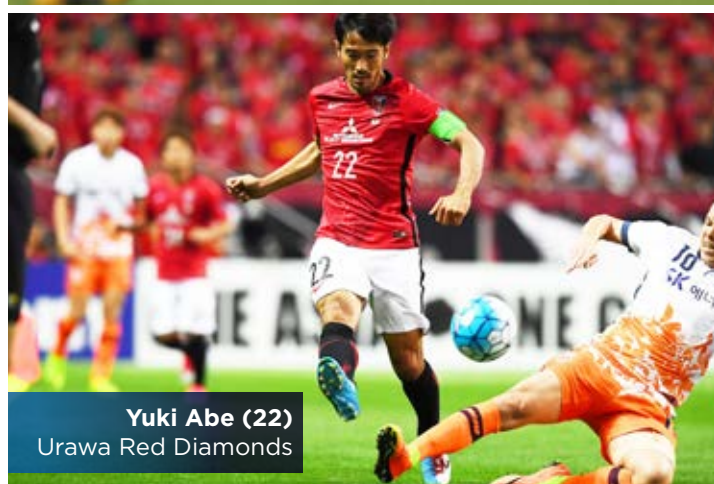
Yasser Al-Shahrani (12)
Al Hilal



Mohammed Al-Breik (2)
Al Hilal



Motaz Hawsawi (25)
Al Ahli Saudi



Yuki Abe (22)
Urawa Red Diamonds

Midfielders

Omar Abdulrahman (10)
Al Ain



Kengo Nakamura (14)
Kawasaki Frontale



Oscar (8)
Shanghai SIPG



Yosuke Kashiwagi (10)
Urawa Red Diamonds



Salman Al-Faraj (7)
Al Hilal



Ricardo Goulart (11)
Guangzhou Evergrande



Zheng Zhi (10)
Guangzhou Evergrande



Kazuki Nagasawa (15)
Urawa Red Diamonds



Attackers







BEST GOALS



BEST GOALS

Set Plays

- 1 Abdulrahman **AL-AIN** v Bunyodkor - 45' Direct Free Kick
- 2 Hulk Guangzhou v **SHANGHAI** - 111' Direct Free Kick
- 3 Al Somah Zobahan v **AL AHLI (SA)** - 86' Direct Free Kick
- 4 Everton Al Taawoun v **AL AHLI (UAE)** - 45' Direct Free Kick
- 5 Theerathon **MUANGTHONG** v Kashima Antlers - 12' Direct Free Kick
- 6 Park Chu-Young Urawa v **FC SEOUL** - 14' Direct Free Kick
- 7 Abdulrahman Bunyodkor v **AL AIN** - 8' Direct Free Kick
- 8 Ismail **AL AIN** v Zobahan - 76' Corner
- 9 Johnathan **SUWON** v Guangzhou - 32' Corner
- 10 Balghaith **AL AHLI (SA)** v Al Ain - 26' Corner

Video highlights

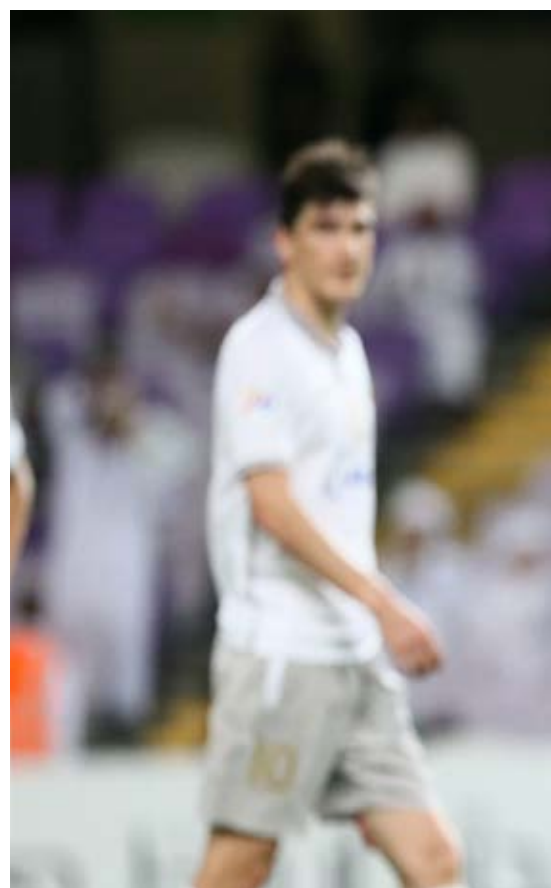
<https://youtu.be/6cZiQYhEKPY>

Open Play

- 1 Hulk **SHANGHAI** v Urawa - 15' Long Range Shot
- 2 Abdulrahman Zobahan v **AL AIN** - 59' Solo Effort
- 3 Hulk FC Seoul v **SHANGHAI** - 53' Long Range Shot
- 4 Abdulrahman **AL AIN** v Esteghial - 60' Solo Effort
- 5 Ramires Osaka v **JIANGSU** - 39' Long Range Shot
- 6 Silva **URAWA** v Al-Hilal - 88' Through Pass/Shot
- 7 Hulk Jiangsu v **SHANGHAI** - 94' Long Range Shot
- 8 Khribin **AL HILAL** v Persepolis - 81' Solo Effort
- 9 Hulk **SHANGHAI** v FC Seoul - 27' Long Range Shot
- 10 Al-Sawat Lokomotiv v **AL TAAWOUN** - 18' Solo Effort

Video highlights

<https://youtu.be/jdO3udsMJRw>





AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL 2016



ONE ASIA  ONE GOAL  ONE ASIA



PREVIOUS WINNERS



Previous Winners

2016 AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Guangzhou Evergrande (CHN)



Final

First Leg

19/11/16	Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors (KOR) (Leonardo 70, 77)	2-1	Al Ain (UAE) (Asprilla 63)
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Jeonju World Cup Stadium, Jeonju

Second Leg

26/11/16	Al Ain (UAE) (Lee Myung-joo 34)	1-1	Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors (KOR) (Han Kyo-won 30)
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Hazza Bin Zayed Stadium, Al Ain

Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors win 3-2 on aggregate

2015 AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Guangzhou Evergrande (CHN)



Final

First Leg

07/11/15	Al Ahli (UAE)	0-0	Guangzhou Evergrande (CHN)
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Al Rashid Stadium, Dubai

Second Leg

21/11/15	Guangzhou Evergrande (CHN) (Elkeson 64)	1-0	Al Ahli (UAE)
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Tianhe Stadium, Guangzhou

Guangzhou Evergrande win 1-0 on aggregate

2014 AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Western Sydney Wanderers (AUS)



Final

First Leg

25/10/14	Western Sydney Wanderers (AUS) (Tomi Juric 64)	1-0	Al Hilal (KSA)
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Parramatta Stadium, Sydney

Second Leg

01/11/14	Al Hilal (KSA)	0-0	Western Sydney Wanderers (AUS)
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King Fahad International Stadium, Riyadh

Western Sydney Wanderers win 1-0 on aggregate

2013 AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Guangzhou Evergrande (CHN)



Final

First Leg

26/10/13	FC Seoul (KOR) (Sergio Escudero 11, Dejan Damjanovic 83)	2-2	Guangzhou Evergrande (CHN) (Elkeson 30, Gao Lin 58)
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Seoul World Cup Stadium, Seoul

Second Leg

09/11/13	Guangzhou Evergrande (CHN) (Elkeson 58)	1-1	FC Seoul (KOR) (Dejan Damjanovic 63)
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Guangzhou Tianhe Stadium, Guangzhou

Aggregate score 3-3. Guangzhou Evergrande win on away goals

2012 AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Ulsan Hyundai (KOR)



Final

10/11/12	Ulsan Hyundai (KOR) (Kwak Tae-hwi 13, Rafinha 68, Kim Seung-yong 75)	3-0	Al Ahli (KSA)
Ulsan Munsu Football Stadium, Ulsan			

2011 AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Al Sadd (QAT)



Final

04/11/11	Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors (KOR) (Eninho 19, Lee Sung-hyun 90+2)	2-2	Al Sadd (QAT) (Sim Woo-yeon 30-og, Abdul Kader Keita 61)
Jeonju World Cup Stadium, Jeonju			
After extra-time. Al Sadd win 4-2 on penalties			

2010 AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Seongnam Ilhwa Chunma (KOR)



Final

13/11/10	Seongnam Ilhwa Chunma (KOR) (Sasa Ogenovski 29, Cho Byung-kuk 53, Kim Cheol-ho 83)	3-1	Zobahan (IRN) (Mohammadreza Khalatbari 67)
National Stadium, Tokyo			

2009 AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Pohang Steelers (KOR)



Final

07/11/09	Al Ittihad (KSA) (Mohammed Noor 74)	1-2	Pohang Steelers (KOR) (No Byung-jun 57, Kim Hyung-il 66)
National Stadium, Tokyo			

2008 AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Gamba Osaka (JPN)



Final

First Leg

05/11/08	Gamba Osaka (JPN) (Lucas 37, Yasuhito Endo 43, Michihiro Yasuda 68)	3-0	Adelaide United (AUS)
Expo '70 Commemorative Stadium, Osaka			

Second Leg

12/11/08	Adelaide United (AUS)	0-2	Gamba Osaka (JPN) (Lucas 4, 14)
Hindmarsh Stadium, Adelaide			

Gamba Osaka win 5-0 on aggregate

2007 AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Urawa Reds (JPN)



Final

First Leg

07/11/07	Sepahan (IRN) (Mahmoud Karimi 47)	1-1	Urawa Reds (JPN) (Robson Ponte 45)
Foolad Shahr Stadium, Esfahan			

Second Leg

14/11/07	Urawa Reds (JPN) (Yuichiro Nagai 22, Yuki Abe 71)	2-0	Sepahan (IRN)
Saitama World Cup Stadium, Saitama			

Urawa Reds win 3-1 on aggregate

2006 AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors (KOR)



Final			
First Leg			
01/11/06	Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors (KOR) (Yeom Ki-hun 59, Botti 90+1)	2-0	Al Karama (SYR)
Jeonju World Cup Stadium, Jeonju			
Second Leg			
08/11/06	Al Karama (SYR) (Iyad Mando 54, Mohanad Ibrahim 60)	2-1	Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors (KOR) (Ze Carlo 88)
Khaled bin Al Walid Stadium, Homs			
Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors win 3-2 on aggregate			

2005 AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Al Ittihad (KSA)



Final			
First Leg			
26/10/05	Al Ain (UAE) (Ali Msarri 50)	1-1	Al Ittihad (KSA) (Mohamed Kallon 85)
Tahnon Bin Mohammed Stadium, Al Ain			
Second Leg			
05/11/05	Al Ittihad (KSA) (Mohamed Kallon 2, Mohammed Noor 33, Joseph-Desire Job 57, Ahmed Dokhi 69)	4-2	Al Ain (UAE) (Shehab Ahmed 55-pen, Luis Tejada 90)
Prince Abdullah Al Faisal Stadium, Jeddah			
Al Ittihad win 5-3 on aggregate			

2004 AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Al Ittihad (KSA)



Final			
First Leg			
24/11/04	Al Ittihad (KSA) (Redha Tukar 28)	1-3	Seongnam Ilhwa Chunma (KOR) (Denis Laktionov 27, Kim Do-hoon 81, Jang Hak-young 90)
Prince Abdullah Al Faisal Stadium, Jeddah			
Second Leg			
01/12/04	Seongnam Ilhwa Chunma (KOR)	0-5	Al Ittihad (KSA) (Redha Tukar 27, Hamzah Idris 45, Mohammed Noor 55, 78, Manaf Abushgeer 90)
Seongnam Sports Complex, Seongnam			
Al Ittihad win 6-3 on aggregate			

2003 AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Al Ain (UAE)



Final			
First Leg			
03/10/03	Al Ain (UAE) (Salam Jawhar 40, Mohammed Omar 75)	2-0	BEC Tero Sasana (THA)
Tahnon bin Mohammed Stadium, Al Ain			
Second Leg			
11/10/03	BEC Tero Sasana (THA) (Therdsak Chaiman 60-pen)	1-0	Al Ain (UAE)
Rajamangala Stadium, Bangkok			
Al Ain win 2-1 on aggregate			

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