



AFC WOMEN'S  
**ASIAN CUP**  
JORDAN 2018

**OFFICIAL PROGRAMME**

6-20 April 2018



# متعة المتابعة الحية

للأحداث الرياضية من مقاعدكم

## الدرجة السياحية مع طيران الإمارات

سواء كنتم من عشاق كرة القدم الإنجليزية، أم كرة السلة الأميركية، وبطولات التنس أو مسابقات الجولف، فلن تفوتكم مشاهدة المنافسات الحاسمة خلال رحلاتكم.

أهلاً بالفرد

  
Emirates

# CONTENTS

5 AFC MESSAGE  
HE Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa

7 LOC MESSAGE  
HRH Prince Ali Bin Hussein

8 HISTORY

12 Q&A: MAYSA JBARAH



14 SCHEDULE



16 JORDAN



17 CHINA PR



18 THAILAND



19 PHILIPPINES



21 JAPAN



22 AUSTRALIA



23 KOREA REPUBLIC



25 VIETNAM

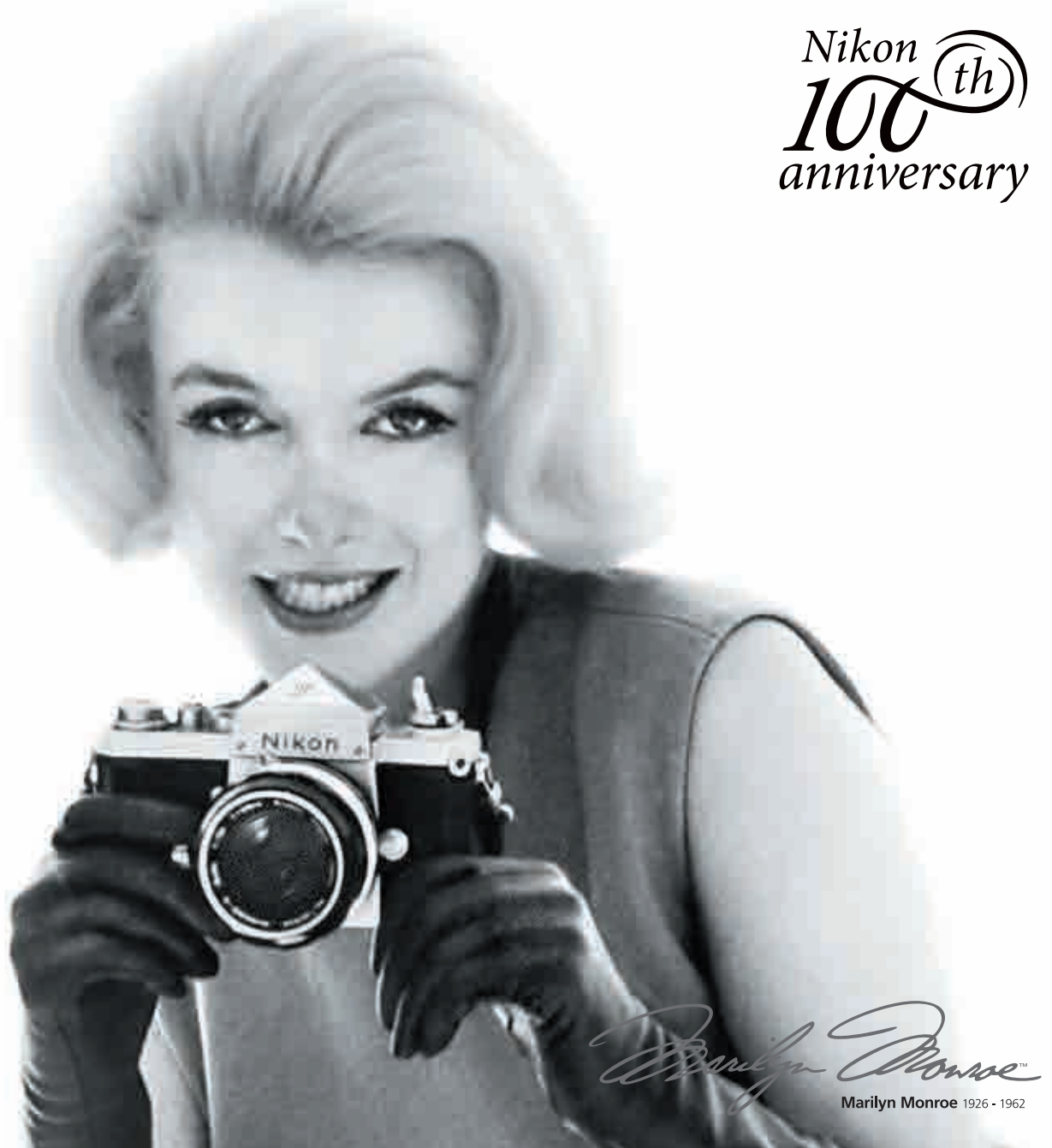
26 IN FOCUS: SAMANTHA KERR



31 STADIUMS



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# AFC MESSAGE:

HE Shaikh Salman bin  
Ebrahim Al Khalifa



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



Dear friends,

On behalf of the Asian Football Confederation it gives me great pleasure to welcome everyone to the pinnacle event in women's football in Asia - the AFC Women's Asian Cup Jordan 2018.

And a special welcome to Amman, the capital of Jordan, which will make history this year by becoming the first country in the West Asian Zone to host the finals of the AFC Women's Asian Cup.

Women's football in Asia is improving every year and we expect that the eight qualifiers will produce the quality of football which has made Asian women's teams such a force on the world stage.

Congratulations to the hosts Jordan, to Australia, China PR, Japan, Korea Republic, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam for reaching these finals - often through difficult and fiercely fought qualifying competitions.

Not only will this tournament crown the champions of Asia but it will also provide the five Asian qualifiers for the FIFA Women's World Cup France 2019. I am sure that our qualifying teams will be strong contenders next year in France.

I would like to add my thanks to the Jordan FA and their Local Organising Committee for their hard work in building on the legacy left by the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup to produce a stage fitting of this prestigious tournament.

The AFC's Vision and Mission is to ensure that our teams succeed on the world stage and to do that we must deliver outstanding competitions. I am proud to say that the JFA, the AFC and the LOC have combined to achieve that goal.

Whether you engage with the tournament in the stadiums, through television coverage or through social and digital media, I am sure that you will be excited and enthralled by the AFC Women's Asian Cup Jordan 2018.

We must also thank the match officials for their continued excellence - again, refereeing is another area where Asia excels on the world stage. My thanks go also to the AFC Women's Football, Competitions and Referees' Committees.

Finally, I wish all the teams the very best of luck and am confident that they will produce football of the very highest quality.

HE Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa  
AFC President

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# LOC MESSAGE:

## HRH Prince Ali Bin Hussein



**HRH Prince  
Ali Bin Al Hussein**  
LOC President

Sisters and brothers in football,

What a great pleasure it is to be hosting Asia's top women's teams right here in Jordan, in a tournament that will bring them together in the region for the very first time in history, and for that, I am both grateful and proud.

On behalf of the Jordanian football family, I thank the Asian Football Confederation for their trust; my team at the Local Organising Committee is determined to deliver a tournament of the highest standards, giving the national teams of Australia, China PR, Japan, Philippines, Korea Republic, Thailand, Vietnam and Jordan the perfect atmosphere to fully express their talents, and show the world that our women's football is truly world class.

Jordan has firmly established itself as a hub for women's football in the region, particularly after the remarkable delivery of the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup in 2016. The past few years have armed us with a wealth of expertise and knowledge, which we vow to put into service to further develop women's football locally and in the region so it can reach its full potential.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who believe in women's football, and those who helped manifest this tournament from the realm of dreams to concrete reality; from our generous sponsors and supporters in the government and the private sector, to members of the media who we consider our strategic partners, and most of all, I'd like to thank our Nashmiyat, we wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for your courageous spirits and persistent ambition.

I would also like to take this opportunity to greet those who will come to Jordan to support their teams. May you create the most beautiful and unforgettable of memories here, not only of exquisite football but also of Jordan's openness and hospitality, its rich culture, dramatic nature and captivating historical sites.

Looking forward to celebrating Asian women's football with you all; as we honour our continent's diversity, harmony and spirit.

Sincerely,

HRH Prince Ali Bin Al Hussein  
LOC President



# HISTORY

# A NEW BEGINNING

History will be made at the AFC Women's Asian Cup Jordan 2018 when the continental competition is held in West Asia for the very first time. It will be the 19th edition of the tournament, which has seen China claim a record eight titles – including seven in a row between 1986 and 1999. The past two titles have been won by Australia and Japan, with the East Asians going into the current campaign as defending champions following their 1-0 victory over the Matildas in the 2014 final.

**A**zusa Iwashimizu's goal secured Japan's maiden AFC Women's Asian Cup title in Vietnam four years ago when the Nadeshiko saw off holders Australia 1-0 in the final to be crowned continental champions for the first time, having previously finished as runners-up on four occasions.

The victory saw Norio Sasaki's side add Asia's biggest prize to the FIFA Women's World Cup they had won in Germany in 2011 when Japan became the first senior team from the continent to become global champions.

The inaugural AFC Women's Asian Cup, known as the AFC Women's Championship until 2006, was held in Hong Kong in 1975 when New Zealand defeated Thailand 3-1 in the final to become the Asian Football Confederation's first female continental champions.

Chinese Taipei staged the next tournament two years later and the hosts would go on to lift the trophy as the second successive final ended 3-1, with Thailand again the unlucky losers.

India and Hong Kong hosted the next two editions of the competition as Chinese Taipei underlined their dominance on the

continent by beating the Indians 2-0 in 1979 to retain their title and then running out 5-0 winners over Thailand to claim a hat-trick of championships.

Having thrice been defeated in the final, Thailand finally got their hands on the trophy in 1983 when, on home soil, they beat India 3-0 in final.

Complete dominance followed, though, as China stepped to the fore to win the next seven editions of the tournament between 1986 and 1999.

The Steel Roses claimed their first title when an early brace by Niu Lijie secured a 2-0 victory over Japan in the final, before Ma Li's goal three years later made it back-to-back titles following a 1-0 win over Chinese Taipei, with both tournaments having been played in Hong Kong.

Japan played host for the first time in 1991 and the Nadeshiko would advance all the way to the final, where they ran into a China side that had well and truly gathered momentum.

A 5-0 win for China brought an emphatic end to Japan's run as the Steel Roses matched







Chinese Taipei's three in a row ahead of the inaugural FIFA Women's World Cup that was held in China later that year.

The two finalists and Chinese Taipei, who defeated DPR Korea on penalties to finish third, all advanced to the global showpiece, with both China and Chinese Taipei reaching the quarter-finals before elimination at the hands of Sweden and the USA respectively.



China's dominance on the continent continued as the East Asians picked up title number four in Malaysia after Liu Ailing scored a first-half hat-trick against DPR Korea to secure a 3-0 victory in the final.

The Asian champions and Japan again progressed to the 1995 FIFA Women's World Cup in Sweden, having earlier won the gold and silver medals at the 1994 Asian Games.

Japan would secure their first win at the FIFA Women's World Cup with a 2-1 victory over Brazil although they exited at the group stage, while China advanced to a second successive knockout stage.



And China then got revenge on Sweden for the defeat in the 1991 quarter-finals by ousting the hosts on penalties following a 1-1 draw, before falling to a late Germany winner in a 1-0 semi-final loss and eventually finishing fourth after the USA won the third-place play-off 2-0.

Back on the continent, normal service was resumed in Malaysia in 1995 when Sun Wen and Fan Yunjie scored in the final 20 minutes to claim a 2-0 victory over Japan.

The Steel Roses finished as silver medalists at the 1996 Olympic Games after a 2-1 defeat to the USA in the final, but there was to be no loosening of their grip on the AFC Women's Asian Cup as Liu bagged a brace in a 2-0 win over DPR Korea in the 1997 final.

The Chinese were then so close to becoming world champions at the 1999 FIFA Women's World Cup in the USA when they won five in a row to progress to the final for the first time.

Then, in one of the most iconic matches in the women's game and in front of more than 90,000 spectators at the Pasadena Rose Bowl in Los Angeles, hosts USA brought an end to China's dream by winning on penalties after a goalless draw.

Sun finished as the joint top scorer with seven goals and also

won the Golden Ball for the tournament's best player, while the forward underlined her status as one of the greatest players on the planet when she was named FIFA Women's Player of the Century alongside the USA's Michelle Akers.

Later that year China would go on to win the 1999 AFC Women's Asian Cup in the Philippines as Wang Liping opened the scoring and Liu Ying added a brace in a 3-0 victory over Chinese Taipei in the final.

However, after a 13-year period that had seen China sweep aside all challengers, their reign finally ended in Chinese Taipei in 2001 when DPR Korea defeated the Steel Roses 3-1 in the semi-finals before lifting their first continental title as Ri Kum-suk and Ri Un-gyong scored in a 2-0 victory over Japan in the final.

China were back in the final two years later in Thailand but DPR Korea would again prove their nemesis with Ri Kum-suk opening the scoring then netting an extra-time penalty in a 2-1 victory.

Korea Republic finished third following a 1-0 victory over Japan in the third place play-off after the four semi-finalists had already booked their passage to the 2003 FIFA Women's World Cup.

Only China, though, would make it out of the group stage before they fell to Canada in the last eight as they failed to match the standards set in the previous edition of the tournament.

But the Steel Roses were able to secure their eighth continental title in 2006 in Australia, after the hosts had joined the Asian Football Confederation earlier that year.

China gained revenge on DPR Korea by claiming a 1-0 victory in the semi-final while Australia joined them in the final following a 2-0 win over Japan.

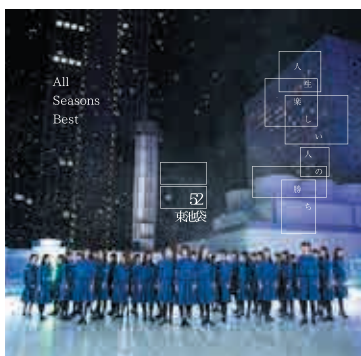
And the Matildas appeared to be on their way to a first continental title when Caitlin Munoz and Joanne Peters gave them a 2-0 half-time lead.

But Han Duan and Ma Xiaoxu hit back after the interval to force extra-time and ultimately penalties, before Han struck the





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# HISTORY

decisive spot-kick as China were crowned champions.

A year later the FIFA Women's World Cup was again held in China with the eight-time Asian champions, Australia, DPR Korea and Japan all representing the AFC.

Only Japan missed out on a place in the quarter-finals, but the three remaining sides all fell in the last eight.

Ri Kum-suk was again the star for DPR Korea in the 2008 AFC Women's Asian Cup in Vietnam, with the forward's treble securing a 3-0 win over Australia in the semi-final to book another date with China after the Steel Roses defeated Japan 3-1.

Bi Yan gave China an early lead in the final but Ri Kum-suk levelled after the interval and Ri Yong-ae struck the winner as DPR Korea were crowned three-time Asian champions.

In 2010, the tournament returned to China for the first time since 1997 but DPR Korea again got the better of the Steel Roses in a 1-0 win after extra-time in the semi-final, while Australia overcame Japan to also advance to the final.

There was to be no separating the holders and Australia in the final as Jo Yun-mi's second-half equaliser cancelled out Samantha Kerr's opener and the tie went to penalties. Kyah Simon then hit the decisive spot-kick in a 5-4 victory as the Matildas won the tournament for the first time.

Japan recovered from their semi-final defeat to post a 2-0 win over China and finish third after goals from Kuzue Ando and Homare Sawa, significantly, secured a place at the following year's FIFA Women's World Cup in Germany.

The Nadeshiko would go on to win the biggest prize of them all after claiming a 3-1 penalty shootout victory over the USA in the final after twice trailing in a 2-2 draw.

Coach Sasaki's team had earlier beaten Germany in the quarter-finals and Sweden in the semi-finals to secure their place in the showpiece game, before Aya Miyama's equaliser in the

last 10 minutes of the final forced extra-time.

The hosts again went in front but Sawa levelled three minutes from time as the game would ultimately be decided from the spot.

And it was defender Saki Kumagai who hit the winning penalty as Japan were crowned Asia's first FIFA World Cup winners at senior level. AFC Hall of Famer Sawa, meanwhile, finished as the tournament's top scorer and MVP.



Three years later in Vietnam, Japan finally brought their drought on the continent to an end as Iwashimizu - who had scored a 122nd-minute winner against China in the semi-finals - netted just before the half hour to defeat Australia 1-0 and add the continental title to their world title.

Japan, Australia, Korea Republic, China and fifth-placed Thailand qualified for the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup in Canada, with the first four progressing to the knockout rounds. Korea Republic fell to France in the last 16, while China exited to the USA in the quarter-finals.

In a rematch of the 2014 AFC Women's Asian Cup final, Mana Iwabuchi scored three minutes from time to eliminate Australia 1-0, before Japan advanced to the final after seeing off England 2-1. But the USA ended the dream of successive titles with a comprehensive 5-2 victory.

The AFC Women's Asian Cup is now set to embark on an exciting new beginning with the tournament staged in West Asia for the first time.

Japan will be looking to be crowned back-to-back champions,

while Australia's strong 2017 ranks them among the favourites.

China are aiming to return to former glories and Korea Republic will look to secure successive semi-final appearances.

Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines will aim to showcase Southeast Asia's steady rise in recent years, and the hosts will look to put on a strong performance in front of home support.

AFC Women's Asian Cup				
Year	Final	Third Place Play-Off	Venue	
2014	Japan 1-0 Australia	China 2-1 Korea Republic	Vietnam	
2010	Australia* 1-1 (AET) DPR Korea	Japan 2-0 China	China	
2008	DPR Korea 2-1 China	Japan 3-0 Australia	Vietnam	
2006	China* 2-2 Australia	DPR Korea 3-2 Japan	Australia	
2003	DPR Korea 2-1 (AET) China	Korea Republic 1-0 Japan	Thailand	
2001	DPR Korea 2-0 Japan	China 8-0 Korea Republic	Chinese Taipei	
1999	China 3-0 Chinese Taipei	DPR Korea 3-2 Japan	Philippines	
1997	China 2-0 DPR Korea	Japan 2-0 Chinese Taipei	China	
1995	China 2-0 Japan	Chinese Taipei* 0-0 Korea Republic	Malaysia	
1993	China 3-0 DPR Korea	Japan 3-0 Chinese Taipei	Malaysia	
1991	China 5-0 Japan	Chinese Taipei* 0-0 (AET) DPR Korea	Japan	
1989	China 1-0 Chinese Taipei	Japan 3-1 Hong Kong	Hong Kong	
1986	China 2-0 Japan	Thailand 3-0 Indonesia	Hong Kong	
1983	Thailand 3-0 India	Malaysia* 0-0 Singapore	Thailand	
1981	Chinese Taipei 5-0 Thailand	India 2-0 Hong Kong	Hong Kong	
1979	Chinese Taipei 2-0 India	Hong Kong beat Western Australia	India	
1977	Chinese Taipei 3-1 Thailand	Singapore 2-0 Indonesia	Chinese Taipei	
1975	New Zealand 3-1 Thailand	Australia 5-0 Malaysia	Hong Kong	

FIFA Women's World Cup				
Year	Venue	Winners	Runners-up	Asian Representatives
2015	Canada	USA	Japan	Japan, Australia, China, Korea Republic, Thailand
2011	Germany	Japan	USA	Australia, DPR Korea, Japan
2007	China	Germany	Brazil	China, DPR Korea, Australia, Japan
2003	USA	Germany	Sweden	China, DPR Korea, Japan, Korea Republic
1999	USA	USA	China	China, DPR Korea, Japan
1995	Sweden	Norway	Germany	China, Japan
1991	China	USA	Norway	China, Japan, Chinese Taipei



## Q&A: MAYSA JBARAH

# DREAMING BIG

Jordan became the first West Asian nation to play at the AFC Women's Asian Cup when they debuted in Vietnam four years ago. Prolific striker Maysa Jbarah scored the country's maiden goal in the tournament and, four years later, will lead the line for the Jordanians on home soil as the continental competition is hosted in West Asia for the first time.

**W**hen Maysa Jbarah turned and curled home with her left foot to equalise for Jordan against Vietnam in the 2014 Women's Asian Cup, she had not just scored the pick of the goals on the night, but she entered the history books with the first ever goal for her nation in the competition.

Four years later, Jbarah and her teammates are playing hosts to the 19th edition of the tournament, with high hopes of bagging one of the five tickets to the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup in France. The 28-year-old discusses her memories from 2014, hopes and ambitions for the future of Al Nashmiyat and the women's game in her country.

**You qualified for the AFC Women's Asian Cup for the first time in Jordan's history in 2014, what are your memories of that tournament?**

It was a wonderful feeling to qualify for the Asian Cup for the first time and face big national teams that have a reputation across the world. Although we didn't progress past the group stage, we gained a lot of

experience from that tournament. It was a turning point for Jordan where we started to put in place a plan to reach the World Cup.

**On an individual level, you had the honour of being the first Jordanian player to ever score a goal in the AFC Women's Asian Cup, what was that like?**

For any football player, especially a striker, the greatest feeling you can experience is scoring your country's first goal in a continental competition. That goal gave me a huge confidence boost and made me believe that I am always capable of scoring with the help of my teammates.

**How different will it be this time playing at home?**

Playing at home and in front of our fans will give us extra motivation to fight harder and remain focused so we do not disappoint everyone who put their faith in us. We want to put Jordan on the map and raise the flag of our nation high in this tournament.

**How do you assess the team's progress since 2014?**





## Q&A: MAYSA JBARAH



Our team has made massive progress in all aspects since 2014. We improved tactically, physically and even in the way we think about things. Now we have an experienced coach in Michael Dickey who has made a big difference in our performances since joining the team. All players are also working hard to develop their game.

**You face the Philippines, Thailand and China PR in the finals, what are your objectives and how do you evaluate your chances?**

Our primary objective in this competition is to win one of the World Cup qualification tickets. This is what we have been working hard towards throughout the past year. All teams participating in this tournament are strong, but we are determined to make it to the World Cup. We were fortunate in that the draw put us with teams of close level to us, so I believe that we have a good chance to qualify.

**How do you see the present and future for Women's football in Jordan and the region in general?**

In the region, Jordan has one of the best women's national teams, but we are aspiring to compete on the global stage by qualifying for the World Cup. Only then will everyone's interest and faith in us grow and they will work harder to develop women's football in Jordan more and more.

**Finally, you faced strong teams in your preparation tour in Spain and Turkey, what were the benefits you gained out of the trip?**



The idea was that we need to play against strong teams that play in different styles, so we can gain experience and learn from our mistakes before kicking off in the tournament. We also needed to learn about our strengths and weaknesses.



# MATCH SCHEDULE

## AFC WOMEN'S ASIAN CUP JORDAN 2018

6 - 20 April 2018 | Amman, Jordan

		Group Stage								
		Friday, 6 April 2018	Saturday, 7 April 2018	Sunday, 8 April 2018	Monday, 9 April 2018	Tuesday, 10 April 2018	Wednesday, 11 April 2018	Thursday, 12 April 2018	Friday, 13 April 2018	
Amman International Stadium	02   16:45			Rest Day		08   16:45	Rest Day		11   16:45	
	CHN VS THA				KOR VS JPN					JPN VS AUS
	01   20:00					07   20:00			09   20:00	
	JOR VS PHI				VIE VS AUS			JOR VS CHN		
King Abdullah II Stadium			03   16:45	Rest Day	05   16:45		Rest Day		12   16:45	
			JPN VS VIE		PHI VS CHN					KOR VS VIE
		04   20:00			06   20:00			10   20:00		
		AUS VS KOR			THA VS JOR			THA VS PHI		

Group A		Group B	
<b>A1</b>	Jordan (JOR)	<b>B1</b>	Japan (JPN)
<b>A2</b>	China PR (CHN)	<b>B2</b>	Australia (AUS)
<b>A3</b>	Thailand (THA)	<b>B3</b>	Korea Republic (KOR)
<b>A4</b>	Philippines (PHI)	<b>B4</b>	Vietnam (VIE)





# MATCH SCHEDULE

## AFC WOMEN'S ASIAN CUP JORDAN 2018

6 - 20 April 2018 | Amman, Jordan

				5th/6th Playoff	Semi Finals			3rd/4th Place & Final
		Saturday, 14 April 2018	Sunday, 15 April 2018	Monday, 16 April 2018	Tuesday, 17 April 2018	Wednesday, 18 April 2018	Thursday, 19 April 2018	Friday, 20 April 2018
Amman International Stadium	Rest Days			13   20:00 3A VS 3B			16   16:45 L14 VS L15	
						17   20:00 W14 VS W15		
King Abdullah II Stadium	Rest Days					15   16:45 1B VS 2A		
				14   20:00 1A VS 2B				





# JORDAN

## GROUP A

AFC Women's Asian Cup Appearances: Group Stage 2014  
Head Coach: Michael Dickey (USA)  
Key Players: Maysa Jbarah, Stephanie Al Naber, Shahnaz Jebreen



Hosts Jordan will be appearing at the AFC Women's Asian Cup for just the second time after becoming the first team from West Asia to compete in the tournament when they debuted in Vietnam four years ago.

Back in 2014, Jordan fell behind to hosts Vietnam in their opening game of the competition but Maysa Jbarah made history by scoring the country's first ever goal in the competition to briefly level the scores. Parity did not last long, though, and the Southeast Asian side eventually ran out 3-1 winners.

With the other two teams in the group being Asian heavyweights Australia and Japan, Masahiko Okiyama's Jordanian team could not have asked for a more difficult start to competitive continental football, but they took heart from their first match.

Stephanie Al Naber was on the scoresheet in their second game but the Matildas claimed a 3-1 victory, before eventual champions Japan proved too good in a 7-0 win.

Although as hosts Jordan had already qualified for the 2018 edition, the West Asians took part in the qualifying campaign in Tajikistan last year as they showcased their impressive recent development.

Jordan began with a 6-0 victory over Bahrain with Jbarah netting a hat-trick, before following up by repeating the scoreline against the United Arab Emirates as this time the forward scored four to take her tally to seven goals in just two games.

The goals kept flowing for the Jordanians and Jbarah as a 10-0 victory over Iraq came next, with the striker getting on the scoresheet four times once more, before a 10-2 victory over Tajikistan - this time with four from Shahnaz Jebreen - made it 32 goals in just four games.

Incredibly, the West Asians still faced a battle to finish top of the group, but a 5-1 victory over second-placed Philippines meant they ended with a perfect five wins from five. Two more goals from Jbarah took her to 13 as she finished the qualification campaign's top scorer.

Jordan have won the WAFF (West Asian Football Federation) Women's Championship a record three times - in 2005, 2007 and 2014 - as they developed into the dominant force in their region.

Undoubtedly worthy of their place in Asia's biggest women's competition, Jordan will now look to secure one of the five places up for grabs at next year's FIFA Women's World Cup in France and become to first West Asian side to appear at the global showpiece.





# CHINA PR

## GROUP A

AFC Women's Asian Cup (8): 2006, 1999, 1997, 1995, 1993, 1991, 1989, 1986; Runner-up 2008, 2003; Third 2014, 2001; Fourth 2010

FIFA Women's World Cup: Runner-up 1999; Fourth 1995; Quarter-Finals 2015, 2007, 2003, 1991

Head Coach: Sigurdur Eyjólfsson (ISL)

Key Players: Wang Shuang, Ma Jun, Wang Shanshan



China are the most successful side in the history of the AFC Women's Asian Cup with a record eight championships to their name, although their last victory came back in 2006.

The East Asians' dominance was at its peak between 1986 and 1999 when they won all seven continental titles in an era that included legends of the women's game such as Sun Wen, Pu Wei and Gao Hong.

China's first success, on their competition debut, came after a 2-0 victory over Japan in the final and they would go on to make their mark on the global game throughout the 1990s.

In the 1995 FIFA Women's World Cup in Sweden they reached the semi-finals, before finishing in the silver medal position at the 1996 Olympic Games a year later after being beaten 2-1 in the final by hosts USA.

Three years later in front of over 90,000 spectators at the Pasadena Rose Bowl in Los Angeles, China were a penalty shootout away from winning the FIFA Women's World Cup, only to again be denied by the USA in what remains one of the most iconic games in women's football.

Success slowed somewhat in the 2000s, although the Steel Roses defeated Australia on penalties to lift the

2006 AFC Women's Asian Cup after goals from Han Duan and Ma Xiaoxu saw them come from two down to force a 2-2 draw.

Four years ago in Vietnam, China took Japan to extra-time in the semi-finals before losing 2-1, but they did secure automatic qualification to the 2018 edition after Yang Li's stoppage-time winner saw off Korea Republic 2-1 to claim third place.

More recently, China took part in the EAFF (East Asian Football Federation) Women's Championship in Japan at the end of 2017 when they tested themselves against two of the other contenders for the title in Jordan.

The Chinese opened the tournament with back-to-back defeats against DPR Korea and Japan, but closed it with an impressive 3-1 victory over Korea Republic as they ultimately finished third in the standings.

Still one of the most feared sides on the continent, China will be expected to advance to at least the semi-finals - a stage they have never failed to reach - in Jordan.

Should they do so, they will start to eye a ninth continental title as the current generation aim to emulate the legends of the Chinese game that have gone before them.



# THAILAND

GROUP A

AFC Women's Asian Cup (1): 1983; Runner-up 1981, 1977, 1975; Third 1986; Fifth 2014; Group Stage 2010, 2008, 2006, 2003, 2001, 1999, 1995, 1991, 1989

FIFA Women's World Cup: Group Stage 2015

Head Coach: Nuengrutai Srathongvian (THA)

Key Players: Taneekarn Dangda, Kanjana Sungngoen, Sunisa Srangthaisong



Only Japan can match Thailand's 15 appearances at the AFC Women's Asian Cup with the Southeast Asians having been a part of all but three of the tournaments.

In the early years of the continental competition, Thailand were among the strongest sides, finishing as runners-up in three of the first four editions before being crowned champions in 1983 after defeating India 3-0 on home soil in Bangkok.

However, since the successful early years of the competition, Thailand have largely continued to be represented but have struggled to get beyond the group stage.

Four years ago in Vietnam, after suffering defeats to China and Korea Republic, Thailand secured a 2-1 victory over regional rivals Myanmar to book a fifth place play-off date against the hosts with a spot at the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup up for grabs.

In front of 18,000 spectators in Ho Chi Minh City, Thailand secured another 2-1 win after a brace from Kanjana Sungngoen as the Southeast Asian nation qualified for the global showpiece for the first time.

The FIFA Women's World Cup in Canada paired Thailand with two of the strongest teams in the tournament, Norway and Germany, as well as Cote D'Ivoire.

Nuengrutai Srathongvian's team lost 4-0 to Norway and Germany but ran out 3-2 winners over Cote d'Ivoire in between

as they secured their maiden win in the tournament and left having gained valuable experience on the biggest stage of all.

In the qualification campaign for the 2018 AFC Women's Asian Cup, Thailand were placed in a group alongside hosts Palestine and Chinese Taipei, with the tournament held in the West Asian nation in April.

Thailand had few problems in their opening match against the hosts with Kanjana opening the scoring in a resounding 6-0 victory. Chinese Taipei's ensuing 5-0 win over Palestine meant that the Thais needed only a draw in their final group game to secure their passage to a 16th continental tournament.

Suchawadee Nildhamrong netted early against the East Asians to ease the pressure on her side and, with no further goals, the 1-0 victory ensured Thailand advanced to Jordan with a 100 percent record.

The next aim for Thailand will be to secure a top-two place in their group and progress to the semi-finals for the first time since 1986 as the Southeast Asian nation seek to replicate the form shown in the early years of the competition when they were regular contenders for the title.

As with four years ago in Vietnam, the AFC Women's Asian Cup will double up as the qualification campaign for next year's FIFA Women's World Cup in France, and Thailand will feel they have it within themselves to return for a second successive time.



# PHILIPPINES

## GROUP A

AFC Women's Asian Cup: Group Stage 2003, 2001, 1999, 1997, 1995, 1993, 1983, 1981

Head Coach: Rabah Benlarbi (FRA)

Key Players: Eva Madarang, Hali Long, Sara Castaneda



**B**ack in the AFC Women's Asian Cup for the first time since 2003, the Philippines will be looking to advance past the group stage for the first time and with it seal a spot at the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup.

The Southeast Asians booked their place at the tournament after finishing second in their qualifying group behind Jordan, who were already guaranteed a place as hosts.

A first-half brace from Eva Madarang set them on their way to a 4-0 victory over the United Arab Emirates as the Philippines kicked off their qualifying campaign in Tajikistan in style.

Madarang was again on the scoresheet as the Malditas scored four without reply against Iraq to leave the nation dreaming of a return to the continental competition.

Hali Long netted a hat-trick and sisters Sara and Anicka Castaneda were also on the scoresheet as the Philippines saw off Tajikistan 8-0 to move a step closer to progressing to Jordan.

Needing to avoid defeat against Bahrain to rubber stamp their tournament berth, Sara Castaneda's goal secured a 1-1 draw to confirm second place in the standings ahead of their table-topping decider with the Jordanians.

Although Jordan ran out 5-1 winners, the tournament had been a huge success for the Philippines, who will have a chance to avenge that defeat when they come up against the

West Asians in their first game in Amman.

The Philippines last appeared at the continental tournament back in 2003, when a 2-1 victory over Guam proved to be the highlight in what was their eighth appearance at the competition.

Four years earlier, the Philippines hosted the competition and got off to the best possible start following a 5-0 victory over Nepal, although they ended up exiting after defeats to Japan, Thailand and Uzbekistan.

More recently, the Malditas were part of the 2017 Southeast Asian Games last August and began the campaign with a 2-1 victory over hosts Malaysia.

Regional rivals Vietnam, Myanmar and Thailand then all defeated them as the Philippines finished fourth in the five-team group.

But under new head coach Rabah Benlarbi, the side will travel to Jordan in high spirits in the knowledge that they are the first team from the country to reach the tournament proper in 15 years and one of the continent's top eight sides.

With the competition's top five teams all set to advance to the FIFA Women's World Cup in France next year, hopes will be high that the Philippines can at least secure a top-three finish in their group and be part of the all-important fifth place play-off.

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# JAPAN

## GROUP B

AFC Women's Asian Cup (1): 2014; Runner-up 2001, 1995, 1991, 1986; Third 2010, 2008, 1997, 1993, 1989; Fourth 2006, 2003, 1999; Group Stage 1981, 1977

FIFA Women's World Cup (1): 2011; Runner-up 2015; Quarter-Finals 1995; Group Stage 2007, 2003, 1999, 1991

Head Coach: Asako Takakura (JPN)

Key Players: Mana Iwabuchi, Saki Kumagai, Emi Nakajima



**D**efending champions Japan will go into the AFC Women's Asian Cup in Jordan as one of the tournament favourites as they look to claim back-to-back titles.

The Nadeshiko have long since been among the continent's top sides and are the only Asian nation to be crowned world champions at senior level, having defeated the USA 3-1 on penalties to win the 2011 FIFA Women's World Cup.

Japan had twice been behind in the game but Aya Miyama and Homare Sawa drew them level each time, before Saki Kumagai scored the decisive penalty to bring a perfect end to the most memorable of tournaments.

A year later they almost added an Olympic gold medal to their role of honour, only for the USA to get their revenge in the final in London following a 2-1 win.

With such success on the global stage, it is somewhat surprising that the East Asians went into the AFC Women's Asian Cup four years ago in Vietnam having never won the continental competition.

The global champions began their campaign with a 2-2 draw against Australia, but needed a late Yuki Ogimi equaliser to secure a point, before they claimed 4-0 and 7-0 victories over Vietnam and Jordan to progress to the semi-finals as table-toppers.

Faced with East Asian rivals China in the semi-finals, the game would go to extra-time after Li Dongna's penalty cancelled out Sawa's opener. Then, with penalties seemingly the inevitable outcome, Azusa Iwashimizu scored with just seconds remaining as Japan booked a date in the final against holders Australia.

Iwashimizu again proved to be the hero as the defender's first-half goal was enough to secure a 1-0 win as Japan were finally crowned continental champions, having finished as runners-up on four previous occasions.

A year later at the FIFA Women's World Cup in Canada, Japan won all three of their group stage games to advance to the last 16, where they defeated the Netherlands 2-1.

The quarter-final saw a repeat of the AFC Women's Asian Cup final as Japan were paired with Australia. Once again the East Asians came out on top as Mana Iwabuchi scored with three minutes remaining to line up a semi-final clash with England.

Japan's habit of winning games late continued as an own goal in added time ensured a 2-1 win, before a 5-2 reversal to the USA in the final meant the Japanese were unable to win successive titles.

The Nadeshiko finished as runners-up in the EAFF (East Asian Football Federation) Women's Championship at the end of 2017 when, after defeating Korea Republic and China, they suffered a 2-0 reversal to DPR Korea in their final game.



FOOTBALL  
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AUSTRALIA

# AUSTRALIA

GROUP B

AFC Women's Asian Cup (1): 2010; Runner-up 2014, 2006; Third 1975; Fourth 2008  
FIFA Women's World Cup: Quarter-Finals 2015, 2011, 2007; Group Stage 2003, 1999, 1995

Head Coach: Alen Stajcic (AUS)

Key Players: Samantha Kerr, Lisa De Vanna, Elise Kellond-Knight



Australia will go into the AFC Women's Asian Cup not only as one of the form teams on the continent, but also in world football after a superb 2017 saw the Matildas rise to a best ever number four in the FIFA Women's Rankings.

The highlight of Australia's 2017 came at the Tournament of Nations in July and August when Alen Stajcic's team secured successive victories over the USA, Japan and Brazil to be crowned inaugural champions.

Australia appeared in the very first AFC Women's Asian Cup back in 1975 when they finished third in Hong Kong, but have achieved their best performances since joining the Asian Football Confederation in 2006.

As hosts the same year, Australia advanced all the way to the final, only to let a two-goal lead slip against China before the East Asians eventually won on penalties.

In 2008, the Matildas finished fourth but returned two years later to be crowned continental champions for the first time.

After finishing second in their group behind hosts China, Kate Gill scored the only goal of the game in the semi-final against Japan to secure a place in their first final on the continent.

The current AFC Women's Player of the Year Samantha Kerr put the Australians in front and, although DPR Korea levelled to

eventually force penalties, Australia were not to be denied as Kyah Simon netted the decisive spot-kick to claim a 5-4 victory.

A place in the 2011 FIFA Women's World Cup was the reward and Australia matched their 2007 showing in reaching the quarter-finals, before being knocked out by Sweden.

Four years ago in Vietnam, Australia advanced from a group comprising Japan, Jordan and the hosts to book a date in the semi-finals with Korea Republic.

Katrina Gorry put the Australians in front just after half-time and, after the East Asians equalised, Elise Kellond-Knight wrapped up a 2-1 victory to secure a place in their second successive final.

However, Australia were unable to claim back-to-back titles as Japan ran out 1-0 winners.

A year later at the FIFA Women's World Cup, Australia lost their tournament opener to the USA but defeated Nigeria and drew with Sweden to progress to the last 16.

Simon's solitary strike then claimed an excellent 1-0 victory over Brazil, before Japan again proved their nemesis as a late goal secured another 1-0 win for the East Asians.

Australia, though, have continued their improvement in recent times and, with talent such as Kerr, captain Lisa De Vanna and Kellond-Knight all within their ranks, will be strong contenders to be crowned continental champions.



KFA

# KOREA REPUBLIC

GROUP B

AFC Women's Asian Cup: Third 2003; Fourth 2014, 2001, 1995; Group Stage 2010, 2008, 2006, 1999, 1997, 1994, 1991  
FIFA Women's World Cup: Round of 16 2015; Group Stage 2003  
Head Coach: Yoon Deok-yeo (KOR)  
Key Players: Ji So-yun, Lee Min-a, Cho So-hyun



**R**egular participants in the AFC Women's Asian Cup, Korea Republic have reached the semi-finals four times over the years, but have yet to appear in the final.

Set to take part in their 12th successive continental competition, the East Asians booked their place after edging past neighbours DPR Korea in the qualification campaign in Pyongyang.

After running out 10-0 winners over India in their opening game, Jang Sel-gi scored what would eventually prove to be a crucial equaliser to earn a 1-1 draw with hosts DPR Korea.

Korea Republic then saw off Hong Kong 6-0 and Uzbekistan 4-0 to finish on top of the group by virtue of goal difference to confirm their passage to Jordan.

Four years ago in Vietnam, the East Asians began their campaign with a comprehensive 12-0 victory over Myanmar, before Park Eun-sun scored a hat-trick in a 4-0 win against Thailand.

With a top-two finish and a place at the 2015 FIFA World Cup assured, the Taeguk Nangja played out a scoreless draw with China to finish on top of the group, only to lose 2-1 to Australia in the semi-final.

China would then get their revenge in the third place play-off following a 2-1 win but, once again, Korea Republic proved themselves as being among the top teams on the

continent.

A year later in Canada, Korea Republic made their second appearance at the FIFA Women's World Cup and Kim Soo-yun provided the highlight of their tournament by scoring the decisive goal in a 2-1 victory over Spain to secure a place in the knockout rounds.

France then brought an end to the run in the last 16 after a 3-0 victory, but the East Asians had by far bettered their previous appearance in the tournament when they suffered three defeats from three to be eliminated at the 2003 group stage.

The side that advanced to the 2003 competition have, however, posted the country's best performance on the continent when, earlier that year, they finished third to qualify for their first FIFA Women's World Cup.

Korea Republic endured a disappointing EAFF (East Asian Football Federation) Women's Championship at the end of 2017 when they lost all three of their games - to Japan, DPR Korea and China - to finish bottom of the standings.

But, having already sealed their return to the continental tournament, Yoon Deok-yeo's team will be looking to at least match their semi-final appearance in 2014 and claim one of the five spots up for grabs at the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup in France.

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# VIETNAM

## GROUP B

AFC Women's Asian Cup: Sixth 2014; Group Stage 2010, 2008, 2006, 2003, 2001, 1999

Head Coach: Mai Duc Chung (VIE)

Key Players: Bui Thi Nhu, Nguyen Thi Tuyet Dung, Huynh Nhu



Vietnam are appearing in their eighth successive AFC Women's Asian Cup and will be looking to go one better than their sixth-placed finish in 2014.

Hosting the tournament for the second time, Vietnam began with a 3-1 victory over Jordan after Nguyen Thi Muon's opener was followed with a brace by Le Thu Thanh Huong.

Defeats to Japan and Australia ensued but their opening-day victory meant the Southeast Asians had done enough to finish third in their group and book a fifth place play-off game with Thailand for a berth at the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup in Canada.

In front of 18,000 spectators at Ho Chi Minh City's Thong Nhat Stadium, Vietnam went two down but pulled a late goal back through Nguyen Thi Tuyet Dung to ensure a frantic finish.

But the hosts were unable to find an equaliser as their regional rivals advanced to the global showpiece and Vietnam's tournament ended in disappointment.

The competition, though, had been a dramatic improvement on four years earlier in China, when the Southeast Asians lost all three of their games without scoring a goal to exit at the first hurdle.

On home soil in 2008, meanwhile, Vietnam did manage a

1-0 victory over Thailand but lost to China and DPR Korea as they failed to make the knockout round.

The Vietnamese have a proud record in the AFF (ASEAN Football Federation) Women's Championship, having been crowned regional champions in 2006 and 2012, while their most recent showing, in 2016, saw a runners-up finish after losing to Thailand on penalties in the final.

And they have proven even more successful in the Southeast Asian Games, winning the gold medal in five of the past seven tournaments, including edging Thailand on goal difference to take first place last year.

Vietnam had few problems in progressing to this year's AFC Women's Asian Cup in Jordan after producing a dominant display in the qualifying tournament in Hanoi.

The hosts began with an 11-0 win over Syria, before defeating Singapore 8-0 and the Islamic Republic of Iran 6-1.

However, with Myanmar also winning their first three games, Vietnam still needed at least a draw with their Southeast Asian rivals to book their ticket to Jordan.

And, after the first half ended scoreless, Thi Tuyet Dung and Huynh Nhu each scored to secure a 2-0 victory and a place at the first AFC Women's Asian Cup to be held in West Asia.



In Focus:  
**SAMANTHA  
KERR**

# GREAT EXPECTATIONS

AUSTRALIA STRIKER SAMANTHA KERR ENJOYED A RECORD-BREAKING 2017 AND THE RECENTLY CROWNED AFC WOMEN'S PLAYER OF THE YEAR NOW HAS HER SIGHTS FIRMLY FIXED ON THE AFC WOMEN'S ASIAN CUP IN JORDAN.



# In Focus: SAMANTHA KERR



Samantha Kerr has come a long way in the nine years since she made her W-League debut in her homeland at the age of 15. But the Australian has arguably come an even longer way since suffering a serious foot injury in 2015 that led her to consider quitting the game.

Now 24, Kerr came back stronger than ever, and recognition for a sensational 2017 came in the form of the AFC Women's Player of the Year award.

It was a year that began well as she received the Julie Dolan award for the W-League's outstanding performer in the 2016-17 season with her club Perth Glory. And it ended with Kerr breaking an Australian scoring record as she became the first player to find the back of the net in seven consecutive Matildas' matches.

In between, Kerr was top scorer in Australia's triumph at the inaugural Tournament of Nations, where they saw off heavyweight opponents in the USA, Japan and Brazil, and became the United States' National Women's Soccer League's (NWSL) all-time leading scorer at Sky Blue FC.



Indeed, the Tournament of Nations success proved to be the highlight of an outstanding year as Australia posted a 1-0 victory over world champions the USA, saw off Asian champions Japan 4-2 with the help of a hat-trick from Kerr and defeated South American champions Brazil 6-1. The Matildas ended 2017 fourth in the FIFA Women's Rankings - the highest they have ever been.

"At a team level, winning the Tournament of Nations," said Kerr, when asked to identify the highlights of an incredible year. "Beating the USA was huge but then we backed it up by beating Japan, who are still one of the best teams in the world, and then beating Brazil 6-1.

"That whole tournament was just huge, and, as a team, we finished the year with seven straight wins and we lost just one game in 2017, so it has been a great year for the Matildas and we still think we can get better.

"On a personal level, beating the record in the USA (all-time top scorer in NWSL). At the time, I didn't really think about the record and it didn't really sink in, but now looking back

it's something that I'm really proud of and being the all-time leading goalscorer in the NWSL seems a bit surreal being so young and really only playing three or four years in

the league after being injured the other two."

Kerr scored in her fifth and sixth consecutive games as Australia saw off China 3-0 and 5-1 in two matches on home soil in November as the Matildas impressively dismantled the eight-time AFC Women's Asian Cup winners.

"I wouldn't say I was surprised," said



Kerr, who went on to score in a seventh successive game when Australia defeated Norway 4-3 at the Algarve Cup in Portugal at the end of February.

"We expect to win against most teams now. There would probably be only one or two teams in the world that we don't think we're favourites against. I might be biased being on the team, but I honestly think we're one of the best teams in the world.

"We have everything now. We have speed, we have skill, we are technically very good. We hadn't seen China in a while, but going by other results that they have had, we thought we would go in with a strong chance."



# In Focus: SAMANTHA KERR



In addition to winning the AFC gong, Kerr also made the initial 10-strong shortlist for the FIFA Women's World Player of the Year award, but missed out on being one of the three finalists.

"Honestly, it's just an honour to win it [the AFC award]," Kerr said. "When I found out I wasn't nominated in the final three [for the FIFA award], it just motivated me more. But it was a huge honour to be nominated in the top 10."

It would be an exaggeration to say that Kerr's career has been a slow-burner given that she is still only 24. She scored in the 2010 AFC Women's Asian Cup final at the age of 16 and has twice won the FFA (Football Federation Australia) Under-20 Player of the Year award.

Kerr may have been around for nine years, but she has had to overcome serious injuries to stay on track. Most recently, ruptured foot ligaments kept her out of action from November 2015 to mid-2016, while she had to have a knee reconstruction in 2011 and another knee operation in 2014.

"I can't put my finger on it," Kerr said, when quizzed on her upturn in fortunes last



year. "The reason I started playing football is because I love it and I've just tried with every game to go out there and play with a smile on my face.

"I will say that I've tried to be more of a professional. I've battled some injuries over the years so taking care of my body and all those kinds of things - the one percenters that have really added up and made a difference to my game.

"Honestly, I've just grown up and I think I'm at that age now where I realise that this is my life, this is my job, and I've taken that completely seriously."

Although she has elevated her game to new levels, there is no danger of Kerr becoming complacent and she has just set her sights even higher.

"I guess up until this year [2017] I never really thought of winning World Player of the Year but I guess now that I've been nominated and been so close, I want to win that one day," Kerr admitted.

"But, like I said, team things are more important than individual awards, so my main goal is to win a World Cup with the Matildas and get a medal at the Olympics."

With an amazing 2017 now in the past, there are new priorities for the Australian national side in 2018, beginning with the AFC Women's Asian Cup in Jordan ahead of the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup in France.

Kerr is incredibly the third Australian in four years to lift the AFC Women's Player of the Year award. Katrina Gorry (2014) and Caitlin Foord (2016) are international teammates who form part of a golden generation that should now be reaching its peak years.

"The most important thing (in 2018) is the Asian Cup in Jordan," said Kerr. "We want to win that and bring the trophy back home to Australia.

"And then, just to keep winning games, to get more games and experience under our belts and more time together





## In Focus: **SAMANTHA KERR**



before 2019, hopefully when we qualify.

"The Asian Cup is the most important thing at the moment, but the World Cup is in the back of my mind."

Kerr continues to play the W-League season for Perth Glory between October and February before switching to the NWSL from April to October.

She is keen to continue to play in both leagues but admits that time will tell if she can continue to perform in two countries.

"I see the time in the W-League as, not a break, but I'm home so it's a mental break," Kerr said. "I'm lucky enough that I get to play in my home city and have time to rejuvenate my mind and my body."

"The USA league is quite taxing, so I'm not sure with age if I'll be able to do two forever, but I want to go to Europe at some point, too."

While many budding young Australian footballers may be looking to Samantha Kerr as an inspiration, it was an American player that had the biggest impact on Kerr as a player and a person.

"I think I've said it before, but Abby Wambach, which is weird because she's a US player," Kerr said when asked to identify the key inspiration in her career. "But I played with her in my first pro-league team in Western New York, and she made more of an impact on me personally rather than as a footballer."

"She was a great teammate, and I don't have one bad word to say about her. When I leave football, that's what I want people to say about me. She just really motivated me to be a better player and also a better teammate."

Wambach's influence could certainly be seen in 2017, as Kerr certainly became a much better player.

There is surely more to come as Kerr and the Matildas aim for their second AFC Women's Asian Cup title. At the age of just 16, Kerr netted Australia's only goal in the 2010 final against DPR Korea, with the Matildas eventually winning on penalties. In Jordan, she will be eight years older and wiser.

On the evidence of the last 12 months, she will also be significantly better than the precocious talent of 2010 and ready to fire her country to continental glory.



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# STADIUMS



## Amman International Stadium

**A**mmann International Stadium and King Abdullah II Stadium, both of which are located in the Jordanian capital, will host the matches during the AFC Women's Asian Cup Jordan 2018.

The venues will stage an equal number of group stage games, with the 17,619-capacity Amman International Stadium the setting for the tournament opener between China and Thailand on April 6, as well as Jordan's first fixture against the Philippines later that day.

Defending AFC Women's Asian Cup champions Japan will

begin their campaign at the 13,000-capacity King Abdullah II Stadium on April 7.

The crucial fifth place play-off for a spot at the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup will be held at Amman International Stadium on April 16, before King Abdullah II Stadium will host both semi-finals on April 17.

Amman International Stadium will be the setting for the third place play-off on April 20 as well as the showpiece event the same day when the two remaining teams battle it out in the final for the right to be crowned continental champions.



## King Abdullah II Stadium

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