

DAILY NEWS

Saturday 15 Feb 2020

ALKASS[®]
INTERNATIONAL CUP



MADRID & MILAN THE MEN WHO CAN

 **FC INTER MILANO 3 / 1**  **MOHAMMED VI ACADEMY**

 **FC ZENIT SAINT PETERSBURG 3 / 5**  **REAL MADRID CF**

TALKASS DIGITAL

FLASHBACK:

How Rangers Roared to Doha Delirium



When the 2019 Al Kass International Cup got underway on Monday 4th February, a glance at the Daily News revealed several strong contenders to be tournament victors: Paris Saint-Germain, with three competition wins to their name; Real Madrid, with their famed 'Factory' youth production line; and Bayern Munich alongside AS Roma, two more of European football's biggest names.

Few observers would have chosen Rangers FC to join this illustrious quartet as potential winners. British sides – let alone Scottish ones – had generally fared badly in previous Al Kass tournaments, with only Arsenal achieving a top four finish, back in 2015.

Furthermore, the Glaswegians had experienced a dramatic fall from grace over the previous decade, forced into bankruptcy and made to fight their way back from the fourth tier of the Scottish game.

However, the fabled club's fortunes had begun to turn around upon promotion to the Scottish Premier League in 2016. And, at around the same time, its youth system underwent a fundamental remodelling. Rangers Academy developed an innovative strategy designed to modernise

development, with basic economics dictating that the club would need to rely on homegrown players rather than expensive recruits. As Al Kass 2019 got underway, the wider world was about to witness the astounding success of this new-found philosophy.

Wednesday 6th February: Rangers Romp Home Against 10-Man Raja

The young Glaswegians embarked upon their glorious Al Kass odyssey with a straightforward win over Raja Casablanca of Morocco. Displaying a strong organisational sense that would serve them well throughout the tournament, Rangers notched three goals without reply against a Moroccan side who had been reduced to 10 men midway through the first half.

The game was chiefly memorable for announcing the arrival of Nathan Young-Coombes onto the Aspire Zone stage. The bustling striker had been signed from Chelsea on the eve of the 2019 Al Kass tournament, and wasted no time in demonstrating why he was held in such high regard. He provided an assist for Cole McKinnon to open the scoring on the quarter-hour as part of a

livewire performance that left Casablanca's defenders tied in knots.

Friday 8th February: Aspire Hit The Right Notes With Victory Over Rangers

Rangers' progress was temporarily halted by an accomplished Aspire Academy side, with Young-Coombes initially watching proceedings unfold from the bench. Captain Kai Kennedy, who had impressed with a goal in the opener against Raja, continued to show his quality from midfield, but Aspire were not to be denied.

Despite Young-Coombes belatedly entering the fray, it was Aspire striker Fahad Al-Abdulla who stole the headlines, plundering two goals as the young Qataris ran out 3-1 winners. And, by beating the Scottish outfit, Aspire achieved a feat that no other side would match at Al Kass 2019. Ultimately though, the scoreline mattered little, as both teams proceeded to the knockout phase at the expense of Raja Casablanca.

Sunday 10 February: Rangers Demolish ESS To Send Shockwaves Through Al Kass

Rangers' reverse against Aspire was quickly

forgotten, as they suddenly clicked into top gear and handed out a thrashing to Ecoile Sportive du Sahel. The result was all the more impressive given that the Tunisians had previously accounted for Bayern Munich.

The match was notable not only for its 7-0 scoreline, but also because it featured two hat-tricks. The first was claimed by Young-Coombes, displaying a potency that ESS simply could not live with. And, astonishingly, when he was withdrawn on the hour mark, replacement Christopher McKee also helped himself to three goals.

Rangers' goalscoring prowess was apparent for all to see. However, it was also clear that they possessed real quality throughout their squad. Greater tests lay ahead, but the young Scots had shown that they were now the team to fear. In fact, the result would have even more one-sided had it not been for the heroics of Tunisian keeper Ahmed Slimen, who produced several world-class saves to prevent the score reaching double figures.

Wednesday 13 February: Rangers Produce Performance of Tournament to Crush Kashiwa

Rangers powered into the final of Al Kass 2019, overpowering Kashiwa Reysol by five goals to one with a performance that combined attacking panache, defensive discipline and total commitment to the cause.

In a clear sign of Rangers' strength in depth, Christopher McKee was named as one of the substitutes, despite having come off the bench to score a hat-trick in the 7-0

demolition of ESS. Of course, the player he had replaced on that occasion – Nathan Young-Coombes – had also scored three, and arguably carried the greatest threat of their potent frontline.

It was no surprise to see Young-Coombes score again - the second goal of the game and his fourth of the tournament – but it was captain Kai Kennedy who stole the show by grabbing a brace and displaying a quality that the Japanese youngsters could not match. The 5-1 win was rich reward for another commanding Rangers performance, and they strode into the final oozing self-belief.

Video message from Rangers FC Manager Steven Gerrard on day of final

"I just want to say congratulations on an incredible tournament so far. We watched the semi-final yesterday, and we thought the performance was outstanding. Everyone stood up to the challenge, and we just want to send a message from back home to wish you all the best in the final. The same type of performance, I'm sure, it'll be good enough against Roma. We're all proud of you back home, and I'm sure all your families are as well. Go and grab it now – no regrets in the final. Good luck."

Friday 15 February: Rangers Crowned Al Kass Champions After Fantastic Final

The final of the 2019 Al Kass International Cup was the greatest ever, according to those who have watched the tournament since its inception in 2012. From start to finish, Rangers went toe-to-toe with Roma, with top-quality football played throughout.

Going into the game, it was difficult to pick a favourite. The Scots had scored 16 in four, while the Italians had scored 12 and won all four of their previous matches. And, alongside the obvious quality, the game was also notable for the highly competitive approach, with the tackles flying in from the first whistle. Indeed, each side would have a player sent off before the first half was over.

Roma had gone ahead midway through the first half, but Rangers refused to surrender, and equalised in stunning fashion on the hour mark thanks to Ciaran Dickson's stunning strike from a tight angle.

Ultimately, the teams could not be separated over 90 minutes, and a penalty shootout ensued, which was highly dramatic in its own right. All 10 players still on the field took spot kicks – including the goalkeepers – before Kai Kennedy coolly stroked home the decisive effort to spark pandemonium on the pitch.

The Rangers youngsters returned to Glasgow as conquering heroes, and proudly paraded the Al Kass trophy before a capacity crowd at Ibrox. Soon, there were reports linking the young players with transfers to some of the biggest clubs in Europe but, for the time being, the squad remains intact, with the stars of Doha intent on attracting the eye of senior manager Steven Gerrard.

The Rangers Class of 2020 has plenty to live up to, but if they take a leaf out of the book of the 2019 champions, they will fear no one at Al Kass.



INTER NET THREE IN ACCOMPLISHED OPENING DISPLAY



Inter Milan got off to a strong start at Al Kass 2020, displaying considerable composure to beat Mohammed VI Academy 3-1 in an occasionally feisty encounter.

This is the third time that Inter have competed at Al Kass, having finished fourth in 2013 and third in 2016. After several years in the wilderness, their first team are back where they belong, vying for supremacy at the top of Serie A. So, for the U16s turning out in Doha, there is every reason to aspire to greatness and demonstrate the kind of winning mentality now regularly on display at San Siro. On this evidence, the youngsters are on the right track.

For their part, the Moroccan youths were playing for a place in their nation's footballing future. Handpicked for a national academy founded by King Mohammed VI, they were competing in Doha for the first time, and put in a determined performance to demonstrate that they were not intimidated by the occasion.

Both sides settled well, with Milan's organisational superiority gradually coming to the fore. And, on 12 minutes they went ahead with the game's first shot on goal. There seemed little danger when Kifle Gambato – guilty of a couple of poor touches early on – picked the ball up 25 yards out. But rather than shooting, the left winger slipped a deft through ball to Amadou Sarr, who evaded a static defence to clip the ball beyond keeper Walid Hasbi from eight yards out.

The Mohammed VI players, while working the ball well through midfield, were struggling to bring their captain Omar Sadik into the game, his every move expertly marshalled by the Inter backline. But as the half hour approached, the imposing striker slipped his marker and rose high to latch on to a precise cross from Youssef Charouq, planting a powerful header just wide of the upright.

The Moroccans were in the ascendancy, and had the ball in the net five minutes later when Inter keeper Paolo Raimondi could only palm a low drive into the path of Charouq, who slotted home from close range only for his effort to be chalked off for offside.

Inter should then have doubled their lead when Gambato crossed low for Tommaso Clerici, but his first-time effort lacked accuracy and missed the target. He made amends two minutes later, latching on to Simone Bonavita's low ball from the left to fire home a first-time shot from close range.

Almost instantly, the Moroccans reduced the deficit when a corner from the left was met by Yassine Khalifi, whose powerful header cannoned against the crossbar, with Mohammed Younes Jazouli pouncing on the rebound to nod home.

As the second half got underway, the Milanese began to ramp up the pressure, which keeper Hasbi sought to relieve on occasion with long balls out of defence, hoping – in vain – to find the head of Sadik.

The Moroccans displayed some deft touches, with brief passages of play characterised by their intricate passing patterns. However, an end product was generally lacking as Milan's defence remained resolutely disciplined.

At the same time, some hefty challenges from the Moroccans demonstrated that they were determined to find a way back into the game, by fair means or foul. They were made to pay for their physical approach on 78 minutes, when a third Inter goal arrived via the penalty spot after substitute Gabriele Menegatti was upended inside the area, with Sarr slotting calmly home to claim his second of the game.

Ultimately, this was a comfortable win for Inter, who appear well-equipped to cope with tougher tests. The Moroccans, meanwhile, will have gained much from their debut Al Kass experience, but most now get some points on the board when they play Altinordu on Sunday.

3
INTER MILAN

X

1
MOHAMMED VI ACADEMY



INTER MILAN

GK Paolo RAIMONDI	FW Kifle GAMBATO
DF Alessandro MAROCCO	DF Federico BAILO
MF Mattia ORTELLI	DF Andrea PELAMATTI (C)
DF Lorenzo PERETTI	MF Nicolo MORATTI
MF Simone BONAVIDA	FW Tommaso CLERICI
FW Amadou SARR	



MOHAMMED VI ACADEMY

GK Walid HASBI	FW Omar SADIK (C)
DF Abderrahim BOU IRKANE	MF Mouad DAHAK
DF Wanis BHAM	MF Youssef CHAROUQ
DF Ilyass LAGRIMI	DF Ayoub EL HAMMAMI
MF Mohammed Younes	MF Yassine KHALIFI
JAZOULI	MF Salah Eddine CHEFFANI



PLAYER OF THE MATCH

Mohammed Younes Jazouli

“ It was a good match, and a really good experience, whether we won or lost. The team battled their way in the match, but always giving their best. We are still learning and growing, and I’m sure the future will hold the best for our team. The atmosphere here at Aspire is great, and as for the facilities, everything is available for us players. Looking to the future, my personal goal as a football player is to become a professional player competing internationally, and our goal as a team is to achieve the highest level of success. I’m sure the best is yet to come. ”

THE EXPERTS SAY...

COMMENTATOR - RHODRI WILLIAMS

“

Did the final score reflect what happened on the field?

The final score did not reflect what happened on the field. If we look at the statistics: possession wise, it was 50-50. Mohammed VI actually had double the number of opportunities. The difference was Inter Milan was more committed and so they walk away with a 3-1 victory.

If we look at the first half, Inter Milan got the early goal then it was very much the Academy putting the pressure on. The second goal just before half time came really against the run of play.

Looking at the Moroccan players, Mohammed Jazouli of course getting man of the match. Their captain, Omar Sadik, he’s a very good player and Youssef Charouq as well in midfield. I think they’ll walk away from this disappointed. The problem is they only have one day off until they play Altinordu FK – that’s the way it falls in this competition. They’ll need to be at their mental best to take them on. For Altinordu FK it’s all about academy football. They’re a very strong team. Whereas Inter Milan have got the win under their belt and they don’t play until Tuesday. So, they’ve got a really good break and they’ll get some training sessions.

”

HEAD COACH OF INTER MILAN

Gabriel Bonacina

“

Is this your first participation in the Al Kass International Cup?

Yes, we are very happy to play in this tournament. For us, it's a great experience and these matches are a great opportunity for the players to work on their technical skills.

What do you think of the atmosphere and also the facilities here at Aspire?

The organization is great and the atmosphere is truly amazing. The facilities and the conditions here are outstanding and we could not ask for more. It's really impressive how much Qatar invests in youth development and others can learn from them.

”



LET'S HEAR FROM THE FANS

Sandra with her sons, Bruno and Nico – from Spain who are resident in Qatar

“

The boys are so interested in football. Bruno has come to cheer for Real Madrid and Nico for FC Zenit. It's great to come to Aspire to enjoy the football and also have time with the family.

”



MEDHI BENATIA,
FRENCH-FOOTBALLER,
CENTRE-BACK FOR
DUHAIL AND FORMER
CAPTAIN OF THE
MOROCCAN NATIONAL
TEAM

“

Have you enjoyed this match between Mohammed VI Academy and Inter Milan?

This is a very good match between our little brothers from the Mohammed VI Academy and Inter Milan. I am supporting my compatriots from the Academy, and even if they did not win today, they showed a strong performance. I'm very happy to see them visiting us here in Doha.

Do you see a difference on the field since the tournament went from u-17 to u-16?

Yes, we see a difference on the physical level, but the players are very promising, and their levels and abilities are very impressive.

I believe that we are looking at the champions of tomorrow and I can only wish them the best.

Do you have a favorite to win the tournament?

I'm hoping the Mohammed VI Academy will do well, because I know they put in a lot of effort in developing young talented players and they have all my support. But I believe that PSG is a very strong team and I know a few members of this team. I believe that PSG is most likely to win this tournament.

”



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FIVE-STAR REAL MADRID EDGE OUT ZENIT IN AN AL KASS CLASSIC

Former champions Real Madrid and Al Kass debutants FC Zenit produced an early contender for match of the tournament as they played out an eight-goal thriller at Aspire.

Real, who won the competition in 2017, were pushed all the way by the Russian outfit, who twice took the lead in a game of many chances.

Real tested Zenit keeper Bogdan Moskvicev after just 23 seconds, the lively Abraham Marina seeing his effort beaten out with the ball almost falling into the path of Spanish striker Samuel Polo.

Marina then saw an effort cleared off the line as Real looked for an early goal, and they had another opportunity on 15 minutes when Polo cut inside Iurii Koledin only to shoot straight at the keeper.

It seemed only a matter of time before Real scored and Diego Flores could have been given a penalty but his honesty probably cost him as he did his best to stay on his feet under a heavy challenge.

Yeray Perez was the next Real player to

go close, seeing his initial effort saved by Moskvicev before firing the follow-up over the bar. The lively Marina was also twice denied by the impressive keeper but the opening goal did finally come when Nico Paz, wearing a cast to protect a broken arm, rose to head the Spaniards in front following a well-taken corner by Mario Rielves.

Zenit responded superbly and stunned Real with an outstanding solo equaliser just a minute later, Andrei Marianov weaving past three challenges before firing home.

Marina was denied by Moskvicev yet again as Real looked to go back in front before the break but the Russian skipper pulled off his ninth save of the half, and Zenit then pulled off a shock by going ahead on 42 minutes. Nikita Luzan crossed and Nikita Vershinin tried to flick it on to Igor Kozlov who finished in style.

An entertaining first half almost ended with another goal but Vershinin's free-kick with the final touch of the half crashed against the bar.

Real started the second half brightly, seeing a penalty appeal waved away after Polo's

shot hit an arm, but the latter soon grabbed a 49th minute equalizer when he fired home after Perez's shot was saved.

Zenit retook the lead on 52 minutes with a superb volley by Nikita Luzan but the Spaniards fought back in an enthralling game as the classy Paz sent a low left-foot shot into the net for a 57th minute equaliser.

Having kept his side in the game on many occasions, Moskvicev gave away a penalty on 67 minutes, bringing down Perez with his feet as the Spaniard tried to round him, and the striker picked himself up to slot home the spot kick.

Eric Alcon defended superbly to keep Zenit at bay on 75 minutes, just when Evgenii Pshennikov seemed likely to equalize for the Russians, but Real put the game beyond doubt when David Garcia beat the keeper at his near post.

Real will face another tough task when they take on Al Kass debutants Sporting Lisbon on Sunday, and the Portuguese youngsters have a great record in their home country so it promises to be another game of high quality.



FC ZENIT

GK Bogdan MOSKVICHEV(C)	FW Andrei MARIANOV
DF Iurii KOLEDIN	MF Iliia RODIONOV
DF Sergei MURADIAN	MF Igor KOZLOV
DF Iliia KIRSH	FW Nikita LUZAN
DF Gleb GRIGOREV	FW Kirill STOLBOV
MF Nikita VERSHININ	



REAL MADRID

GK Guillermo SÚNICO ALONSO	MF Mario MARTÍN RIELVES
DF David JIMENEZ CORREDOR (C)	FW Abraham José NOBREGA
DF Manuel SERRANO SALAZAR	MARINA
DF Alex SÁNCHEZ SIBACHA	MF Nicolás PAZ MARTÍNEZ
MF Marc CUCALÓN PINA	FW Samuel EXPÓSITO POLO
FW Yeray LANCHA PÉREZ	DF Diego JURADO FLORES



PLAYER OF THE MATCH

Nicolás PAZ MARTÍNEZ

THE EXPERTS SAY...

NICK SUMMERBEE COMMENTATOR

“

We've only seen four games so far in the tournament but Real Madrid versus FC Zenit was by far the best game. Terrific! Unbelievable score and fair in the end.

Real Madrid had so many chances in the first half but were not clinical enough to convert those chances. They were pushed all the way by FC Zenit who made their debut tonight. They showed enough to suggest that they could have a good tournament as well.

”

HEAD COACH FC ZENIT

Dmitrii Poliakov

“

I've had just over a month of preparing with the team, and we've had some good games, and camps here, in Italy and Oman. The boys were good right from the start and well organized, but it's also how we reacted. We stuck together as a team and I'm very proud of the team. I'm with the team for the whole tournament and we're going to progress and try our best to play as good as we can.

”



FC ZENIT PLAYERS

Bogdan Moskvichev and
Andrei Marianov

“

Tell us about the importance of a warmup routine for players?

Andrei Marianov: It's very important, because a proper warm up prevents you from getting injured. We do the same routine ahead of every game, and it has been working well for us. Having great conditions like here at Aspire helps as well.

So you are impressed by the facilities here at Aspire?

Bogdan Moskvichev: Definitely! Aspire is a wonderful place and yes, the facilities are one of a kind, the senior team of Zenit has been coming here too. It's just great to be here.

What do you hope to get out of the tournament?

Bogdan Moskvichev: We want to win it of course, and besides that, we want to go home with great memories.

”



HEAD COACH REAL MADRID

Tristan Celador

“

It was a big game and big games are difficult. We want to recognize the good work by FC Zenit. They surprised us and played great football. We regrouped at half time and we have trust in our way of playing and that's how we continued to the end. Now, we have to work hard and try to go as far as we can. We will try to win this tournament but we have to go match by match and keep fighting.

”



SCORERS

Inter Milan

9 FW Amadou Sarr 2 GOALS

10 FW Tommaso CLERICI 1 GOAL

Mohamed IV Academy

6 MF Mohammed Younes JAZOULI 1 GOAL

FC Zenit

7 FW Andrei MARIANOV 1 GOAL

11 MF Igor KOZLOV 1 GOAL

18 FW Nikita LUZAN 1 GOAL

Real Madrid

7 FW Yeray LANCHA PEREZ 1 GOAL

10 MF Nicolas PAZ MARTINEZ 2 GOALS

11 FW Samuel EXPOSITO POLO 1 GOAL

14 FW David PECELLIN GARCIA 1 GOAL

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GAMES SCHEDULES

GROUP STAGE

GROUP A	GROUP B	GROUP C	GROUP D
 Aspire Academy	 Paris Saint-Germain FC	 FC Internazionale Milano	 Real Madrid CF
 Rangers FC	 FC Barcelona	 Altinordu FK	 FC Zenit Saint Petersburg
 Suwon Samsung	 Kashiwa Reysol	 Mohammed VI Football Academy	 Sporting Clube de Portugal

DATE	NO.	TEAMS	TIME	VENUE		
Thu 13.02.	1	Paris Saint-Germain	3-0	Kashiwa Reysol	16:45	5
	2	Aspire Academy	3-1	Suwon Samsung	19:00	5
Fri 14.02.	3	Inter Milan	3-1	Mohammed VI Academy	16:45	4
	4	FC Zenit	3-5	Real Madrid	19:00	4
Sat 15.02.	5	Suwon Samsung	VS	Rangers FC	16:45	5
	6	Kashiwa Reysol	VS	FC Barcelona	19:00	5
Sun 16.02.	7	Altinordu FK	VS	Mohammed VI Academy	16:45	4
	8	Real Madrid	VS	Sporting Clube de Portugal	19:00	4
Mon 17.02.	9	Aspire Academy	VS	Rangers FC	16:45	5
	10	Paris Saint-Germain	VS	FC Barcelona	19:00	5
Tue 18.02.	11	Inter Milan	VS	Altinordu FK	16:45	4
	12	Sporting Clube de Portugal	VS	FC Zenit	19:00	4
POSITION 9 - 12						
Wed 19.02.	13	Position 10	VS	Position 9	16:45	5
	14	Position 12	VS	Position 11	19:15	5
QUARTER FINALS						
Wed 19.02.	15	1st Group A	VS	2nd Group C	16:45	4
	16	1st Group C	VS	2nd Group A	19:15	4
Thu 20.02.	17	1st Group B	VS	2nd Group D	16:45	5
	18	1st Group D	VS	2nd Group B	19:15	5
PLAY OFFS POSITION 5 - 8						
Fri 21.02.	19	Loser Game No. 16	VS	Loser Game No. 18	16:45	4
	20	Loser Game No. 15	VS	Loser Game No. 17	19:15	4
SEMI FINALS						
Sat 22.02.	21	Winner Game No. 16	VS	Winner Game No. 18	16:45	5
	22	Winner Game No. 15	VS	Winner Game No. 17	19:15	5
PLAY OFFS POSITION 5 - 8						
Sun 23.02.	23	Loser Game No. 19	VS	Loser Game No. 20	16:45	4
	24	Winner Game No. 19	VS	Winner Game No. 20	19:15	4
POSITION 3 - 4 & FINAL						
Mon 24.02.	25	Loser Game No. 21	VS	Loser Game No. 22	15:30	5
	26	Winner Game No. 21	VS	Winner Game No. 22	18:00	5

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