

DAILY NEWS

Sunday 23 Feb 2020

ALKASS[®]
INTERNATIONAL CUP



FACE OFF MADRID AND MILAN MAKE FINAL



 **MOHAMMED VI ACADEMY** 1 / 1
(3) (5) **REAL MADRID CF** 

 **FC INTER MILANO** 3 / 1 **PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN** 

HISTORY IN THE MAKING WITH WHISTLE-BLOWING WOMEN



The 2019 edition of Al Kass International Cup made history, when an all-female team of match referees took on officiating duties for each match. The experience proved to be the ideal preparation for the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup Finals in France, with 27 referees and 48 assistants descending on Qatar for their pre-World Cup preparations that included officiating at Aspire-hosted tournament. Pre and post Al Kass Cup, the women – who represented 42 countries – participated in workshops, training and medical examinations at Aspitar Hospital, which is part of Aspire Zone Foundation.

"The Al Kass International Cup was of great assistance for the preparation for the FIFA Women's World Cup 2019," says Kari Seitz, FIFA's Senior Manager of Refereeing in an interview with Kennedy Makambira, from the Aspire Academy Marketing and Communications department. "In terms of facilities, we couldn't ask for anything better."

Seitz described the programme, born out of the excellent relationship between Qatar Football Association, Al Kass Sports Channels, Aspire Academy and FIFA, as a 'super seminar' which, in addition to on-field training, classroom lessons and fitness checks, afforded them the opportunity to test video assistant referee (VAR) technology for the first time.

"We brought the selected referees for a seminar, then were able to officiate the competition using VAR, as our first event with the system," Seitz continues. "It was incredibly necessary in our preparation. As part of the groundwork for the FIFA Women's World Cup we were seeking opportunities to use VAR in a full tournament, and at a high-quality level necessary to create many situations to utilise the technology. The Al Kass Cup provided all this, and it was an important opportunity for us. The result was a great success."

Reflecting on her experience in Qatar, Seitz recalls: "First and foremost, the hospitality was excellent, and the tournament was very well organised and very professional. The quality of the football was top, and the support we received from the federation and the organisers was incredible. We could not have asked for a better experience, and we look forward to the opportunity to return to the Al Kass International Cup in the future."

It has become fairly commonplace to see women officiating at the top levels of the game, and some of the world's major football competitions – including the English Premier League, German Bundesliga and French Ligue 1 – now employ female officials. However, for some referees – including Salima Mukansanga from Rwanda – last year's Al Kass International Cup provided a new experience.

"It was amazing and exciting, and happened to be my first time officiating an international men's tournament featuring talented young male players," she recalls. "Our aim as a team of referees was based on the mantra 'Reach Higher'. With the Al Kass tournament, I was empowered, my confidence grew, and I was ready to face the senior FIFA Women's World Cup when it came about in June."

Mukansanga was grateful for the chance to put the latest technological developments to the test during Al Kass. "Before the tournament with regards to the new technology 'VAR', we had only seminars and courses on it," she recalls. "But I then had a big opportunity to use it during proper live matches and wow, I learnt a lot about it."

"I could not have wished for better preparation for the FIFA Women's World Cup. I know for sure that officiating at Al Kass allowed me to improve my adaptability, ability and technical skills, and gave me the strength to believe that I have the potential and the ability to officiate even men's international football competitions. The Al Kass International Cup helped boost my self-esteem and confidence, and I am grateful for that."

Mukansanga went on to officiate at her first senior FIFA Women's World Cup Finals in France that summer, taking charge of the clash between Sweden and Thailand. "I am glad I had the experience at Al Kass before the World Cup," she says. "I learnt that refereeing approaches are the same - management of the game, control, laws application and interpretation - and this will serve me well in future."

Riem Hussein from Germany also took on refereeing duties in Doha last year, and says she was hugely enriched by her participation in the tournament. "Officiating at the Al Kass International Cup was great for me," she reveals. "My highlight was the first match live on TV with the assistance of the VAR on a magnificent sports ground. This way of officiating was one of the most important experiences for me."

From an organisational and technical perspective, Hussein believes that the Qatar-hosted tournament was the perfect preparation for last June's Women's World Cup. "The football at the Al Kass International Cup was played on a high level," she says. "The players were very fit and ambitious, and created a lot of interesting situations to evaluate. In terms of concentration, decision-making and teamwork, this tournament prepared us very well. The set-up where we were appointed in fixed trios to the Women's World Cup worked brilliantly, as we could use the experience in the demanding matches to work together and get more practice for our teams."

"The World Cup stage is intimidating at any time, but in the Al Kass Cup I found a high-level tournament that had its own fair share of intimidation. I used all this in a positive way to test the serious cases of refereeing in Doha without being so much in the focus of the wider world at the World Cup."

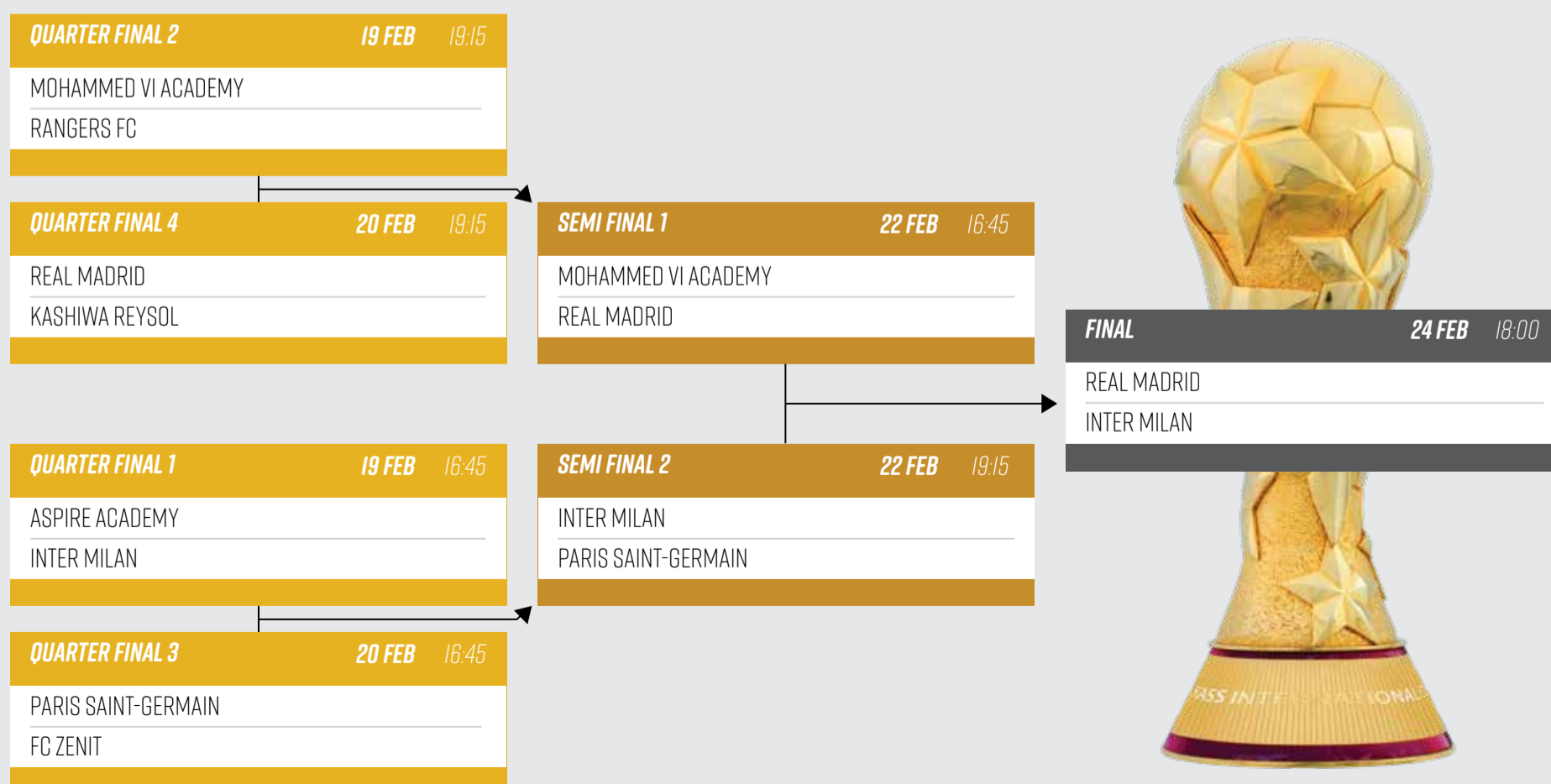
Kate Jacewicz from Australia, Anna-Marie from New Zealand and Laura Fortunato from Argentina were among the referees who sang praises of the Al Kass tournament and enjoyed officiating the matches whose standard of football they found to be high. The trio of them however underscored the opportunity to practice using VAR as the most

important take-away from Al Kass Cup. "The big opportunity to use VAR during proper live matches proved of immense value when we got to France for World Cup says, Fortunato.

Since its inaugural edition back in 2012, the Al Kass International Cup has become a world-renowned youth competition that has been at the forefront of several groundbreaking advancements. In 2019, the tournament scored two firsts - the implementation of the VAR system and an all-female team of officials in charge of an all-male football competition. The Al Kass legacy - in terms of the development of both players and officials - is plain for all to see.



ROAD TO THE CUP



REAL MADRID EDGE OUT MOHAMMED VI IN A THRILLER TO REACH FINAL AFTER PENALTY SHOOT-OUT



Spanish giants Real Madrid deservedly reached their fourth Al Kass International Cup final, but they needed a penalty shoot-out to end the hopes of tournament debutants Mohammed VI Academy.

Real dominated the game and should have won inside 90 minutes but they found Mohammed keeper Walid Hasbi in inspired form.

The 2017 champions had been in high-scoring form throughout the tournament but found the Moroccans difficult to break down, and they had to wait until the 53rd minute to find the net when substitute Mario Martin fired home after great work by David Pecellin (Pece).

Real had a good opportunity on five minutes when Yeray Lancha sent skipper David Jimenez away down the right and ran into the box looking to get on the end of the cross. Jimenez's delivery didn't find his teammate but Abdellah Baallal failed to control the ball and it fell to Lancha who fired narrowly wide.

Samuel Expositio went on a run after 17 minute and let fly with a right-foot effort that seemed destined for the net but crept just past the post.

Real won a free-kick just outside the box midway through the first half when Ayoub El Hammami brought down the skillful Lancha and Hasbi was forced to tip Nico Paz's dipping shot over the bar.

Mohammed VI Academy had a free-kick of their own shortly afterwards but Hassan Aqboub, who starred in the quarter-final victory over Glasgow Rangers, couldn't get on the end of Yassine Khalifi's curling delivery.

Pece was causing problems down the left and he produced two quality crosses in as many minutes, the second of which produced the opening goal of the game.

He found Abraham Nobrega, who saw his effort well saved by Hasbi, but on their next attack Real finally made the breakthrough. Pece again got past his man and found Mario who fired home with a low drive.

Mario, who had only been on the pitch for eight minutes, became Real's ninth different goalscorer of the tournament.

Hasbi continued to keep Mohammed in the game with a series of saves and he denied Abraham again following a fine run by defender Manuel Serrano.

Mohammed had enjoyed a much better second half though and they stunned Real with an equaliser on 88 minutes when Oussame Lyakoubi swept in a deep cross and Salah Cheffani rose well to head home.

It was Mohammed VI Academy Mohammed's first shot on target but as they game moved towards a penalty shoot-out the Moroccans were reduced to 10 men

Khalifi was sent off for a reckless thigh-high challenge on Marc Cucalon and Cheffani could have seen red immediately afterwards for another poor tackle a minute later but he escaped with a yellow card.

Guillermo Sunico was in fine form for Real in the shoot-out, keeping out Aqboub's opening penalty for Mohammed VI Academy and then saving from Cheffani but being deemed to have left his line and the referee demanded a retake.

Real scored from all five of their spot-kicks to take the honours with Mario – who thought he was going to be the hero in 90 minutes – smashing home the match-winning penalty.

1 [3]
MOHAMMED VI ACADEMY

X

1 [5]
REAL MADRID



MOHAMMED VI ACADEMY

GK Walid Hasbi	MF Youssef Charouq
DF Ilyass Lagrimi	DF Ayoub El Hammami
FW Hassan Aqboub	MF Yassine Khalifi
MF Abdellah Baalal	MF Youness Akharraz
FW Omar Sadik ©	DF Taha Souiri
MF Mouad Dahak	



REAL MADRID

GK Guillermo Sunico	FW Abraham Nobrega
DF David Jimenez ©	MF Nicolas Paz
DF Manuel Serrano	FW Samuel Exposito
DF Alex Sanchez	FW David Pecellin
MF Marc Cucalon	FW Eric Gomez
FW Yeray Lancha	



PLAYER OF THE MATCH

Marc Cucalon Pina

“

We're very happy for both, the win and the MVP trophy. This was the culmination of a long day and many training sessions for the team, so without their support, I wouldn't be getting this title. Mohammed VI Academy made things complicated, but we expected this kind of a tough game, as they are physically and technically a good team. In the end, we won with the penalties, which we have been practicing well for. So, congrats to Mohammed VI but we also proved that we deserve to be in the finals.

”

THE EXPERTS SAY...

RHODRI WILLIAMS

“

For the first half, I thought Real Madrid were in control. There were many chances that they didn't put away. During the last 15 to 20 minutes though, Mohammed VI Academy really started to put pressure on them, and we already know how tough (of a team) they are. The crowd was fantastic as well, it was like half of Morocco came to support the team. Then the end was just exciting. Cheffani came and scored that goal, which was wonderful. For the penalty shootout, Real Madrid just looked more comfortable in the penalty situation and I didn't think for one second any of them is going to miss. But how ironic is it that it was Aqboub who missed the first one, when he's been a fantastic player whose goal against Rangers FC is the number one goal in the top five, as chosen by Nick (Summerbee) and Chris (Makin). But football sometimes throws up those scenarios.”

Mohammed VI Academy players are “THAT” good:

“Three of the Mohammed VI Academy players, in particular, have caught the eye of a certain club that is now pursuing an agreement to take them. This highlights how good they've been, not just as a team but as individual players as well.”

On the finals:

“This will be Real Madrid's fourth final. So far, they've only won once. But Real Madrid will do what Real Madrid (always) do. They move the ball very quickly from back to front, and they're very efficient with passing (the ball) and their speed of transition is excellent at every level. I just think that PSG have got this single-minded direct approach to the match, and I think what we're seeing from PSG in this tournament is exactly what Jean-François Pien, Director of the PSG Youth Academy, said about their philosophy.”

”

MOHAMMED VI ACADEMY TEAM MANAGER



Ali Ettouhami

“

The match was difficult for both teams, we struggled a lot to keep up with Real Madrid but the fact that we reached this stage at the tournament playing against a strong team says a lot about the players. We are proud of the players and the level of performance delivered in this tournament.

”

REAL MADRID HEAD COACH



Tristan Celador

“

First of all, congrats to Mohammed VI Academy for being a very brave team. They played with intensity and were very motivated throughout the game. We expected this kind of match and if we had scored a second goal we could've probably finished the game, but we didn't. Fortunately, we scored five goals (in total) and our goalkeeper managed to block one, so we do deserve to play the finals. We have no preference as to which team wins in the Inter Milan – PSG game. They're both good teams with strong academies, but we're prepared for the finals and we'll hopefully take the cup home.

”

FANS FROM THE PITCH



BEST BANNER





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INTER MILAN HOPING TO COMPLETE AN ITALIAN JOB AFTER STUNNING PSG



Inter Milan are hoping to become the first Italian winners of the Al Kass International Cup after stunning three-time champions Paris Saint Germain in the semi-final of the Under 16 competition.

Gabriele Bonaccina's side will now try to go one better than fellow countrymen Roma, who finished runners-up last year, when they take on Real Madrid in Monday's showpiece final (6pm at Aspire).

Inter have reached the semi-finals on each of their three visits to Doha, but this will be their first final, and they had to come from behind to reach it.

PSG, the most successful team in the history of the tournament with three wins, took the lead after just eight minutes when Ismael Gharbi scored from the spot.

Mattia Orтели barged into Ilyes Housni and although that challenge didn't warrant a penalty he then caught the striker's knee with his foot and this time Yousef Al Sharshani, a graduate of Aspire Academy, did point to the spot.

Housni, needing one more goal to become joint top scorer at the tournament, was keen

to take the spot-kick but midfielder Gharbi stepped up to send Paolo Raimondi the wrong way.

Inter pulled level on 23 minutes when Amadou Sarr stabbed the ball home after Lorenzo Peretti had flicked it into his path.

Gharbi could have restored PSG's lead on the half-hour mark when turning nicely but seeing his effort comfortably saved. He also had another effort on target in the dying seconds of the half but it remained 1-1 at the break, which was a fair scoreline as PSG had enjoyed slightly more possession (52%) but the Italians had fired in more shots (six compared to PSG's four).

Inter went ahead on 53 minutes when PSG keeper Louis Mouquet flapped at a high cross and the ball hit left-back Vimoj Mungu before going into his own net.

PSG had kept a clean sheet in two of their three earlier matches in the tournament, but they found Inter in determined mood and the Italians could have scored again following a free-kick. Powerful PSG midfielder Warren Zaire Emery, who has stood out at this tournament despite still being a few weeks short of his 14th birthday, gave away the free-

kick and it was sent in by Gabriele Menegatti but Federico Motti couldn't quite convert it.

PSG thought they had equalised on 68 minutes but the referee correctly ruled the 'goal' out for offside. Gharbi played the ball wide to tricky winger Pascal Lemina who crossed for substitute Jouvence Americo to head home, but he had moved too early.

Within one minute, Inter had gone 3-1 ahead following a corner when the ball flicked up off Lemina and Peretti nodded it into the net. Mouquet got his hand to it but was unable to keep it out.

PSG, who have played in all nine editions of the competition, will now take on Mohammed XI Academy in the third/fourth place play-off prior to Inter's clash with Real Madrid.

The first 22 games of the tournament have produced 95 goals and with four games to go, 13 more are needed for this to become the highest scoring tournament in Al Kass history. The record is 107 in 2014 but there have already been more goals scored during the 2019 edition, when there were 92 goals.



INTER MILAN

GK Paolo Raimondi	MF Gabriele Menegatti
DF Alessandro Marocco	FW Amadou Sarr
DF Nicolo Perin	DF Andrea Pelamatti ©
MF Mattia Ortelli	MF Federico Motti
DF Lorenzo Peretti	FW Tomasso Clerici
MF Riccardo Nava	



PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN

GK Louis Mouquet	FW Wilson Odobert
DF Hugo Lamy	MF Ayman Kari
DF Vimoj Mungu	FW Ilyes Housni
DF Nehemiah Veliz	MF Ismael Gharbi
DF El Chadaille Bitshiabu ©	MF Pascal Lemina
MF Warren Zaire Emery	



PLAYER OF THE MATCH

Lorenzo Peretti

“

I'm happy to be awarded this trophy. This is a good tournament, and it was a very difficult game against PSG tonight. We're very happy with our victory today as it wasn't an easy win. We will now focus on our next match with Real Madrid and we're very really happy to reach the final.

”

THE EXPERTS SAY...

RHODRI WILLIAMS

“

PSG were in control to start with but Inter Milan did exactly what Mohammed VI Academy did to Real Madrid – they got into PSG's faces and put them under a lot of pressure. PSG have kind of coasted through this tournament and they came up against a very tough Inter Milan side. We've not really discussed Inter Milan enough in this tournament, they have kind of just gone about their business quietly. (In this game) we knew that the set piece is likely to cause a problem, and it did. They got their equalizer from a set piece, not directly, but they came in and PSG didn't clear the danger, and that's how they got the first goal. The second goal also came from a corner, which they didn't deal with.

On the final:

“We got Inter Milan against Real Madrid (for the final) – two giant European clubs. But, as I said, we haven't really talked much about Inter Milan, and I think that they are going to do a bit of what Rangers did last year. Inter Milan are a big club, but PSG and Real Madrid looked very good. Alessandro Altobelli, an Inter Milan legend, spoke to us on Al Kass Digital, and he said ‘mark my words, the next game they will win and I feel good that they will go on and win the tournament’. (Maybe) he's nearly there.”

”

INTER MILAN HEAD COACH



Gabriele Bonacina

“

That was a great game, and a great experience for all our players to play against PSG; a strong team. Now we are happy with today's results and already thinking forward for the finals. This is the first time we reach the final at Al Kass International Cup which is an opportunity for the players to grow and ofcourse we will try to win the final and be able to express our potential.

”

PSG HEAD COACH



Herve Guegan

“

I think it was a very good game against a very good team. They do play like an Italian team. They defend very well and have very good organization. Also, they are very physically strong, more than our players, I would say. We tried our best, but of course, I'm very disappointed that our players played with good spirit, but they didn't have a chance to fully recover. I'm very happy that we gave it our all and that's good for the future, I think. For Monday's game, I think we will change some players, but we'll try to win for sure.

”



TOP SCORERS



CHARLIE LINDSAY
RANGERS FC

5 GOALS



DAVID PECELLÍN
GARCIA
REAL MADRID

4 GOALS



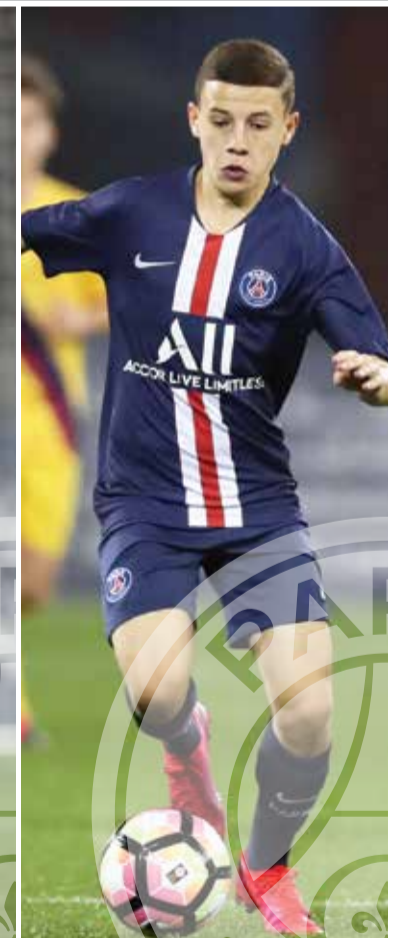
OMAR SADIK
MOHAMMED VI ACADEMY

4 GOALS



ILYES HOUSNI
PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN

4 GOALS



ISMAEL GHARBI
PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN

4 GOALS

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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	SCORE	TIME	VENUE
Thu 13.02.	1	Paris Saint-Germain	3-0	16:45	5
	2	Aspire Academy	3-1	19:00	5
Fri 14.02.	3	Inter Milan	3-1	16:45	4
	4	FC Zenit	3-5	19:00	4
Sat 15.02.	5	Suwon Samsung	2-3	16:45	5
	6	Kashiwa Reysol	2-1	19:00	5
Sun 16.02.	7	Altinordu FK	0-3	16:45	4
	8	Real Madrid	4-1	19:00	4
Mon 17.02.	9	Aspire Academy	4-4	16:45	5
	10	Paris Saint-Germain	2-2	19:00	5
Tue 18.02.	11	Inter Milan	0-1	16:45	4
	12	Sporting Clube de Portugal	4-4	19:00	4
POSITION 9 - 12					
Wed 19.02.	13	FC Barcelona	4-0	16:45	5
	14	Suwon Samsung	0-1	19:15	5
QUARTER FINALS					
Wed 19.02.	15	Aspire Academy	0-1	16:45	4
	16	Mohammed VI Academy	3-2	19:15	4
Thu 20.02.	17	Paris Saint-Germain	5-0	16:45	5
	18	Real Madrid	7-0	19:15	5
PLAY OFFS POSITION 5 - 8					
Fri 21.02.	19	Rangers FC	2(4)-2(3)	16:45	4
	20	Aspire Academy	4-2	19:15	4
SEMI FINALS					
Sat 22.02.	21	Mohammed VI Academy	1(3)-1(5)	16:45	5
	22	Inter Milan	3-1	19:15	5
PLAY OFFS POSITION 5 - 8					
Sun 23.02.	23	Kashiwa Reysol	VS	16:45	4
	24	Rangers FC	VS	19:15	4
POSITION 3 - 4 & FINAL					
Mon 24.02.	25	Mohammed VI Academy	VS	15:30	5
	26	Real Madrid	VS	18:00	5

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