



Al Shorta's Greatest Moments - Number 15: Al Shorta clinch eighth league title (2003)



Al Shorta brought in seven new players for the start of 2002-03 season as well as a new manager in club legend Basem Qasem, and after finishing in a promising third position the previous campaign, Al Shorta's supporters were optimistic that this could be their season. And it turned out to be exactly that, with the Police being crowned champions of the league, earning their first league title of the new millennium.

The Green Harps started off the season brilliantly with eight straight victories, conceding just two goals in those first eight matches. Those eight wins included a tight 1-0 victory over fierce rivals Al Zawraa (thanks to Ahmad Mnajid's first-half goal) as well as an exceptional 8-0 drubbing of Duhok at Al Shorta Stadium - a game in which the young Nashat Akram fired in a

brilliant hat-trick. After this fantastic eight-game run however, Al Shorta drew three of the next four matches and manager Basem Qasem was fired, replaced by the man who had led Al Shorta to their most recent title in 1998: Abdelilah Abdul-Hamed.



After the appointment of Abdelilah, Al Shorta bounced back from their short slump in form by winning ten of their next eleven matches, including an unforgettable 3-2 derby win over Al Quwa Al Jawiya, storming to the top of the Iraqi Premier League (known as the Iraqi First Division League at this time) table. But a four-game winless run between rounds 24 to 27 led to Abdelilah saying goodbye to the club and being replaced by former Iraq captain Hassan Farhan, who managed the club for one game only - a 6-3 victory over Al Difaa Al Jawiya - before the Iraqi Football Association (IFA) decided to stop the league due to the war.

This meant that the second half of the season was not completed, but in order to determine a champion of the league,

the IFA decided to abandon the second half altogether and crown whoever were the leaders of the league at the end of the first half (i.e. the first 19 games) as the champions - and that team was Al Shorta, who were two points ahead of both Al Talaba and Al Najaf at the halfway point of the season. This meant that Al Shorta had won their eighth league title and had qualified for the 2003 Arab Champions League and the 2004 AFC Champions League, in what is one of the finest moments in the illustrious history of this great club. Ahmad Mnajid won Al Shorta's top scorer award with 19 goals over the whole 28 games, 15 of which came in the first 19 games, and Al Shorta added this league title to the Umm Al Ma'arak Cup and Al Quds International Championship trophies that they had won earlier in the season to complete an historic treble (which would have been a quadruple had the Harps defeated Al Talaba in the Iraqi FA Cup final).

AL SHORTA'S RESULTS FROM THE 2002-03 IRAQI FIRST DIVISION LEAGUE:

Round	Opponent	Result	Al Shorta scorers
1	Al Basra	4-1 win	Ammar Ahmad (2), Ahmad Mnajid, Wissam Zaki
2	Samarra	2-0 win	Ammar Abdulhussein, Ahmad Mnajid
3	Al Sinaah	2-0 win	Ahmad Mnajid, Ammar Abdulhussein
4	Erbil	3-0 win	Ammar Abdulhussein, Ahmed Hussein Adan, Ahmad Mnajid
5	Al Jaish	1-0 win	Ammar Abdulhussein
6	Al Zawraa	1-0 win	Ahmad Mnajid
7	Duhok	8-0 win	Nashat Akram (3), Tassyer Abdulhussein, Ahmad Mnajid, Mazen Abdulsattar, Ammar Abdulhussein, Abbas Raheem
8	Al Nasiriya	5-1 win	Ahmad Mnajid (2), Nashat Akram, Tassyer Abdulhussein, Wissam Zaki
9	Al Difaa Al Jawiya	1-1 draw	Ahmad Mnajid
10	Al Minaa	1-0 win	Ahmad Mnajid
11	Al Mosul	1-1 draw	Wissam Zaki
12	Al Najaf	1-1 draw	Abbas Raheem
13	Al Semawah	3-0 win	Ahmad Mnajid (3)
14	Al Quwa Al Jawiya	3-2 win	Ammar Ahmad, Abbas Raheem, Ammar Abdulhussein
15	Al Karkh	3-1 win	Ammar Ahmad, Abbas Raheem, Ammar Abdulhussein
16	Al Talaba	0-2 loss	
17	Kirkuk	2-0 win	Ahmad Mnajid (2)

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18	Zakho	3-2 win	Nashat Akram, Tassyer Abdulhussein, Mohammed Hadi
19	Al Naft	2-0 win	Ammar Abdulhussein, Tassyer Abdulhussein
Match annulled	Al Basra	3-2 win	Ahmad Mnajid (2), Mazen Abdulsattar
Match annulled	Samarra	3-2 win	Abbas Raheem, Faris Abdulsattar, Ali Wahaib
Match annulled	Al Sinaah	2-1 win	Ali Wahaib, Faris Abdulsattar
Match annulled	Erbil	3-0 win	Ahmed Kadhim, Ahmad Mnajid, Faris Abdulsattar
Match annulled	Al Jaish	1-4 loss	Ammar Abdulhussein
Match annulled	Al Zawraa	1-1 draw	Mohanad Mohammed Ali
Match annulled	Duhok	0-1 loss	
Match annulled	Al Nasiriya	1-1 draw	Ahmed Mnajid
Match annulled	Al Difaa Al Jawiya	6-3 win	

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