



## Al Shorta's Greatest Moments - Number 3:

### **Al Shorta reach AFC Champions League final and refuse to face Israeli club (1971)**



tournament was over.

They defeated Taj Club 3-2 in the preliminary round thanks to a Ghanim Abdul Hamid goal and two goals from Shaker Ismail to qualify for Group B, where they were drawn with Maccabi Tel-Aviv of Israel, Bangkok Bank F.C. of Thailand and F.C. Punjab Police of India. Al Shorta were set to play Maccabi Tel-Aviv in their first game, but the Iraqis showed courage and refused to play against the Israelis, so they automatically lost the game 2-0. Al Shorta then defeated Bangkok Bank F.C. 2-0 with goals from Menam Hussein and Sabah Hatem, and in the following game they thrashed F.C. Punjab Police 6-1 thanks to a hat-trick from Ghanim Abdul Hamid and goals from Mudhafar Nouri, Sabah Hatem and Riyadh Nouri to finish second in Group B and qualify for the semis.

In 1971, Aliyat Al Shorta became the first Iraqi team to reach the AFC Champions League final, but they ended the tournament as runners-up because they refused to play Israeli club Maccabi Tel-Aviv in the final for political reasons. Aliyat Al Shorta qualified for the tournament by winning the 1969-70 League of the Institutes title, their third league title in a row.

The manager of the side was Mohammed Najib Kaban and some of his star players were Satar Khalaf, Lateef Shandal, Douglas Aziz, Tariq Aziz, Abid Kadhim, Shaker Ismail, Mudhafar Nouri, Riyadh Nouri, Ghanim Abdul Hamid, Essam Khalil, Menam Hussein and Tariq Hussein. The team changed their name from Aliyat Al Shorta to Al Shorta for the tournament, and changed it back to Aliyat Al Shorta once the

In the semi-finals, Al Shorta beat Taj Club 2-0 to reach the final, with goals from Menam Hussein and Shaker Ismail sealing the victory. Al Shorta became the first Iraqi side to reach the final of an AFC competition in the process. They were set to face Israeli side Maccabi Tel-Aviv in the final, the team that they had already withdrawn against earlier in the tournament. Many people expected Al Shorta to play the game



this time though, seeing as it was the final rather than just a group game.

However, Aliyat Al Shorta players ran onto the pitch proudly waving the Palestinian flag around the field. To them, it didn't matter whether it was the final or not; what was important to them was morals. They may have automatically lost the final 2-0, handing the 1971 AFC Champions League title to their Israeli opponents, but in the eyes of all Arabs, Al Shorta were the true champions of Asia in 1971, especially as their courageous actions got Israel transferred to UEFA from AFC.

The Al Shorta team returned to Baghdad and were greeted with a heroes' reception. They had done Iraq and the whole Arab world proud, and it cannot be doubted that this is one of

the greatest ever achievements from any Iraqi team, from both a sporting and moral standpoint. Only a select group of elite Asian clubs can say that they have participated on the grand stage of the AFC Champions League final and fans still look back on it with great pride today.



© Copyright 2010-2016

You are free to copy texts, whether in whole or part, and pictures from this website provided that proper acknowledgement is given to [www.alshorta.webs.com](http://www.alshorta.webs.com).

webs

Create your own free website today

