



## AI Shorta's Greatest Moments - Number 1

### AI Shorta complete their mission of conquering Asia with win against Taj Tehran (1971)



When Aliyat Al Shorta won the 1969-70 League of the Institutes title, their third league title in a row, little did they know that it would enable them to conquer the entire continent.

The Iraq Football Association officially became an AFC member in 1970 and thus its clubs were eligible to participate in the Asian Champion Club Tournament, now known as the AFC Champions League - Asia's biggest club competition. As league champions, it was Aliyat Al Shorta who became the first ever Iraqi team to participate in a major continental tournament.

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 this tournament, and changed it back to Aliyat Al Shorta once the tournament was over.

They immediately showed that they meant business in Bangkok by defeating the defending Asian champions, Taj Tehran of Iran, 3-2 in the preliminary round thanks to a Ghanim Abdul Hamid goal in the first minute of the game and two goals from Shaker Ismail (34 and 64 minutes respectively).

This enabled them to have an easier draw for the group stage, where they

would face Bangkok Bank F.C. of Thailand and F.C. Punjab Police of India in Group B.

Al Shorta 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. This gave the Police four points from four and ensured that they advanced.

With Taj Tehran winning Group A, Al Shorta were set up to face the defending Asian champions once again in the Iraqis' decisive game. The Police proved they were Asia's best by beating them again, this time by a score of 2-0, with goals from Menam Hussein (via a fantastic right-wing cross from Mudhafar Nouri) and Shaker Ismail (on 35 minutes) completing Al Shorta's mission of conquering Asia. The Harps were set to play against Israeli club Maccabi Tel Aviv on two separate occasions during the tournament but the proud Arabs refused to face off against the Zionists and instead waved the Palestinian and Iraqi flags around the field to rapturous applause from the Thai audience.

Al Shorta returned to Baghdad as heroes and received an amazing welcome from the fans, even holding an open-top bus parade in celebration of the success. Israel were subsequently expelled from the AFC, making the triumph even sweeter for 'Al Qeetharah' in what remains the greatest achievement in all of Iraqi club football.



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