



## **AI Shorta's Greatest Players - Number 19:** **Dhurgham Ismail**



Dhurgham instantly became a fan favourite at AI Shorta on 9th February 2011. AI Shorta were facing off against Erbil, who had won the league in three of the last four seasons, at AI Shorta Stadium and Hussein Abdul Wahid had given Erbil the lead within the first two minutes of the game. Erbil were in control of the match, and AI Shorta needed a moment of inspiration to get them back into the game. Just 16 years old at the time, the young full-back came up with that moment ten minutes before the end of half-time, running onto a loose ball and lashing it into the top corner on the half-volley from 25 yards out in what was his first goal for the club. That equaliser gave AI Shorta some much-needed confidence and the Police ended up winning the game 3-1.

Since that day, Dhurgham became more and more influential for AI Shorta, often alternating between the left-back and left-wing positions in AI Shorta's formation. The youngster scored 22 goals in total for the club (two in 2010-11, two in 2011-12, five in 2012-13, four in 2013-14 and nine in

2014-15). He scored the third goal in the historic 3-0 win over Al Talaba which secured the 2012-13 league title and is also a set-piece specialist having scored free-kicks and penalties for both AI Shorta and the Iraq national team. The star captained AI Shorta for the first time in a 3-0 win over Naft Misan in the 2014-15 season and won Kooora.com's award for the 2014-15 Iraqi Premier League player of the season; his outstanding displays that season led to him earning himself a move to Turkish Süper Lig side Çaykur Rizespor in August 2015.

Dhurgham is also an important player for the Iraq team and he came into spotlight during the 2015 AFC Asian Cup as he scored a crucial penalty in the quarter-final against Iran and was named in AFC's official team of the tournament at just 20 years of age. Dhurgham's dream is to one day play in one of Europe's top five leagues (Premier League, La Liga, Serie A, Bundesliga and Ligue 1), and this looks increasingly possible as the days go by.

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