



Al Shorta's Greatest Players - Number 32: **Issam Khalil**



Issam Khalil Mahdi was a defender who was born in 1950, and who began his career at Aliyat Al Shorta in 1969. A one-club man, Issam spent his whole career at the club, including the merger side formed in 1974.

Issam was part of the historic Aliyat Al Shorta side that became the first Iraqi team to participate in a continental club competition when they qualified for the 1971 edition of what is now known as the AFC Champions League. The Police Machinery twice defeated the defending Asian champions Taj Tehran and reached the final where they refused to play Israeli club Maccabi Tel Aviv, coming home to a heroes' welcome as the true Champions of Asia.

He went on to win the 1971-72 league title with Aliyat Al Shorta as well as the Iraqi National League title with the Harps in the 1979-80 season, before tasting success in another continental competition. The number four was a key man at the back as Al Shorta beat Al Nejme 4-2 on aggregate to claim the inaugural Arab Champions League title in 1982.

He played numerous time for the Iraq youth, military and national teams before retiring as an Al Shorta great in 1983 and now works at the Ammo Baba

Football School in Baghdad, helping to discover and nurture new young Iraqi footballers.

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