



Al Shorta's Greatest Moments - Number 33:

Hashim Ridha secures AFC Champions League spot (2004)



Al Shorta kicked off their 2003-04 season in an attempt to retain the league title they had won the previous season, and they won their opening game 7-1 against Diyala with Hashim Ridha bagging a hatrick. Al Shorta won five and drew one of their opening six games and sat in second place in their group behind Al Quwa Al Jawiya.

However, the deteriorating security situation in Iraq at the time meant that continuing the league season proved too difficult and the Iraqi FA decided to cancel the season. Iraq had been allocated two group stage slots at the 2005 AFC Champions League, and so the Iraqi FA decided to set up two playoff ties to determine which teams qualified for Asia's main club competition.

Al Zawraa were set to play Al Naft in the first playoff tie but Al Naft withdrew and Al Zawraa therefore qualified automatically. The other playoff tie was between Al Quwa Al Jawiya and Al Shorta, the two top teams of their group and coincidentally the two Iraqi teams who had participated in the 2004 edition of the AFC Champions League. The tie was played in two legs, both played at the Franso Hariri Stadium in Erbil. Al Shorta won the first game 3-2 with goals from Ammar Abdulhussein and Tassyer Abdulhussein and a winning goal from Hashim Ridha, and drew the second leg 1-1 with Hashim Ridha scoring Al Shorta's goal against their ten man opponents. Al Shorta won the tie 4-3 and qualified for the AFC Champions League for the second consecutive season, solidifying themselves as the best team in Iraq at that time.

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