

ALKASS U17 UPDATES

SEATTLE SOUNDERS SUMMERSAULT INTO THE SEMIS

DAY 05



RECAP: 16.02.2025

Paris Saint-Germain claimed a 3-1 victory over Kashiwa Reysol, moving to the top of the Alkass International Cup standings.

Romeo Garnier opened the scoring in the 13th minute after having an earlier goal ruled offside. A goalkeeping error on Souleyman Zeghadi's shot gave PSG a 2-0 lead at halftime. Garnier struck again in the second half, finishing a perfect pass from Noah Tiehi to make it 3-0. Kashiwa Reysol pulled one back late, but PSG's dominant display secured all three points and the tournament lead.



The fourth day of the Alkass International Cup featured a thrilling clash between Al Ahly FC and Real Madrid, with the Spanish side securing a narrow 1-0 victory. Al Ahly's challenge became steeper just 10 minutes in when midfielder Adam Youssef received a red card, leaving his team a man down. Real Madrid squandered an early penalty but found the breakthrough when Santiago Nogales' shot deflected off Mohamed Abdelhady and into the net.

Madrid dominated possession in the second half but lacked sharpness in front of goal, missing multiple chances to seal the win. Despite their wastefulness, they held firm defensively to claim all three points in a tightly contested match.

MATCH 1: ASPIRE ACADEMY VS SEATTLE SOUNDERS FC

The fifth day of the Alkass International Cup U-17 kicked off with an exhilarating match between Aspire Academy and the American club Seattle Sounders. Early in the game, Seattle's Omar Hassan, scored a penalty opportunity but was denied by a remarkable save from Aspire's goalkeeper, Ahmed Saber, igniting cheers from the crowd. However, VAR intervened, identifying an error in the penalty execution, leading to a retake. This time, Hassan successfully converted the shot, marking his third goal in the tournament. The first half concluded with Seattle Sounders leading 1-0. Despite numerous attempts from both teams in the second half, the score remained unchanged, securing Seattle's victory.

"They are young boys, young players, they need to learn from the good days, and they need to learn as well from the bad days. Today was not a good day, but I still want to take the positive things." -Alvaro Mejia Perez Aspire Academy Head Coach
"Losing is part of the game, that's how you bounce back from it. I am super proud of the boys" -Ethan O'Neill Seattle Sounders Head Coach

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**-ALVARO MEJIA PEREZ
ASPIRE ACADEMY HEAD COACH**



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**-ETHAN O'NEILL
SEATTLE SOUNDERS HEAD COACH**

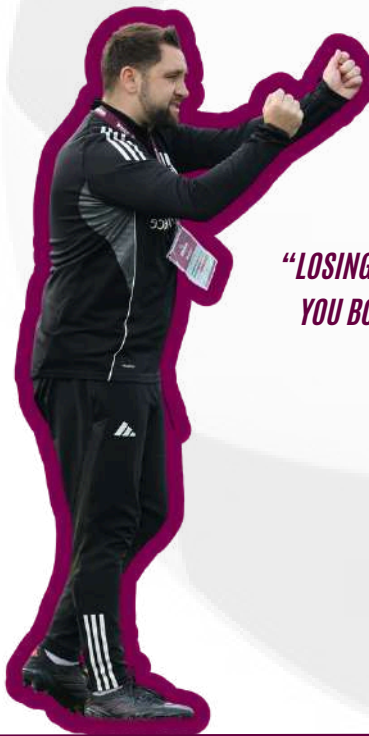
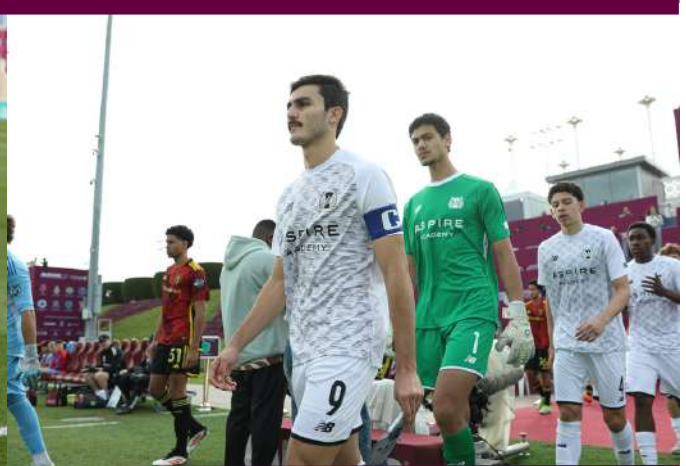


PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS:



PRESS CONFERENCE: ASPIRE ACADEMY VS SEATTLE SOUNDERS



At a post-match press conference, Seattle Sounders Head Coach Ethan O'Neill emphasized the resilience and character of his team despite the loss. He acknowledged that losing is part of the game and highlighted how the squad showed great determination in their previous two matches, which helped them advance to the semifinals. Expressing pride in his players, he stressed that the team's success depended on contributions from all 22 players, noting that squad rotation was crucial in keeping fresh legs on the field. Speaking about their opponents, the coach praised Aspire Academy for their strong performance and talented players. He pointed out that Aspire was a physically dominant team, with some players being a year or two older than his squad, making the match even more challenging. However, he admired the academy's ability to develop top-tier talent and appreciated the opportunity to compete against them.

Meanwhile, Aspire Academy Head Coach Alvaro Mejia Perez reflected on his team's performance, admitting that their first half was not up to the mark. He noted that certain attitudes and behaviors affected their game, which ultimately led to a disappointing result. However, he emphasized the importance of learning from both victories and defeats, as his young players are still in the developmental stage. Despite the loss, he commended his team for fighting until the last minutes and acknowledged Seattle Sounders for their strong defensive play. Looking at the broader tournament, the Aspire coach recognized the progress his team had made, highlighting their solid performances in previous matches. While he admitted that the first half of this game was their weakest of the competition, he remained optimistic about the team's growth and learning experience. He reassured his players of his support, expressing confidence that better performances would come in the future.

MATCH 2: MOHAMMED VI FA VS RANGERS FOOTBALL CLUB

The second match of the day featured an intense battle between Mohammed VI Academy and Rangers FC. Mohammed VI's captain, Ayman Ezzarky, opened the scoring 18 minutes into the game, marking the team's first goal of the tournament. However, just four minutes later, Kyle Glasgow responded with a goal for Rangers, leveling the score at 1-1. The match saw further drama when Rangers were awarded a penalty, but Mohammed VI's goalkeeper, Yahya Errakani, made a crucial save. The match's final score was a draw sending Rangers FC right to the knockouts.

"IT WAS A TOUGH GAME, BUT WE ARE HAPPY WE QUALIFIED TO THE NEXT ROUND"

***-LAURENCE ELLIS
RANGERS FC HEAD COACH***



PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS:



PRESS CONFERENCE: MOHAMMED VI FA VS RANGERS FOOTBALL CLUB



At a post-match press conference, Mohammed VI Head Coach Khalid SEKKAT reflected on his team's journey throughout the tournament, emphasizing the importance of the experience gained. He acknowledged that the first two matches were part of a learning curve for his young squad, but by the third match, they had found their rhythm. He praised his players for their effort and determination, highlighting that every experience in this competition is valuable for their development.

The coach dismissed age as a limiting factor, stating that his players performed at a high level and made significant progress throughout the tournament. While recognizing the differences between previous editions of the competition and this one, he made it clear that there were no excuses—only lessons to take forward. He expressed pride in the team's performance and reiterated that this tournament was an important step in preparing the players for the future.



Meanwhile, Rangers FC Head Coach Laurence Ellis shared his excitement about advancing to the next round, describing the match as a tough challenge. He acknowledged that Mohammed VI played exceptionally well in the first half, and his team had to make adjustments at halftime to regain control of the game. He noted that Mohammed VI, despite not winning their previous two matches, had shown quality, strong movement, and good team spirit, making them a formidable opponent.

The Rangers coach also highlighted the mental aspect of the game, explaining that with players as young as 14 to 16 years old, it was important to alleviate pressure and allow them to focus on their development. He admitted that it took some time for his players to settle into the match, but he viewed that as part of their learning experience. He emphasized that this tournament serves as a crucial step in their growth as young footballers, helping them navigate challenges and improve their game.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE BLEACHERS

"I AM SUPPORTING ASPIRE, BECAUSE MOST OF THE PLAYERS ARE MY CLASSMATES AND MY FRIENDS AT SCHOOL. I AM FROM ASPIRE AND I DO ATHLETICS, AS ASPIRE WE ARE AN ACADEMY RELATED TO MANY DIFFERENT SPORTS THAT'S WHY MOST OF THE PLAYERS ON THE PITCH ARE OUR FRIENDS AND CLASSMATES. THEIR PERFORMANCE TODAY IS VERY GOOD, THEY'RE ON TOP OF THEIR GROUP, THEY NEED TO WIN TODAY'S GAME OR DRAW TO SECURE FIRST PLACE. SO HOPEFULLY THEY COME BACK IN THE GAME AND SECURE THE LEAD IN THE GROUP. THE ORGANIZATION IS VERY GOOD WITH ALKASS AND ALL THE SPONSORS. THE ORGANIZATION AND THE WAY THEY GIVE YOUNG PLAYERS THE CHANCE IS VERY GOOD AND VERY HELPFUL. I BELIEVE ASPIRE WILL WIN THE TOURNAMENT, I AM SURE THEY ARE CAPABLE OF WINNING THE TOURNAMENT."

**-ABDULLAH
ASPIRE ACADEMY FAN**

"MY SON IS NUMBER 82, HE IS ACTUALLY THE CAPTAIN OF THE SOUNDERS. THIS IS HIS 3RD SEASON WITH THE SOUNDERS HE STARTED WHEN HE WAS ABOUT 12 WITH THE SOUNDERS. HE IS BRITISH BUT HE WAS BORN IN AMERICA SO HE IS BOTH. WE HAVE BEEN HERE FOR A WEEK TO SEE THE GROUP GAMES, BUT THEN WE HAVE TO LEAVE AND GO BACK TO WORK, EVEN IF THEY QUALIFY FOR THE FINAL WE WILL HAVE TO GO. WE FLEW IN FROM SEATTLE AND HIS GRANDPARENTS FLEW IN FROM ENGLAND. SO, A LOT OF THE FAMILY IS HERE. THIS WAS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO COME TO THIS COUNTRY AND EXPLORE IT. I LOVE IT HERE. WE HAVE GONE DOWN TO SOUQ WAQIF AND WE LOVE IT DOWN THERE. IT'S BEEN A FUN TRIP. VERY NICE PEOPLE, VERY CLEAN CITY."

**-MOTHER OF RONAN LEEMINGS
SEATTLE SOUNDERS**

"MY SON IS ASHTON RIGGS, HE IS NUMBER 70 AND HE PLAYS WINGER OR CENTER ATTACKING MID. HE IS A SUB TODAY, BUT HE PLAYED IN THE FIRST GAME. HE HAS BEEN IN THE CLUB FOR ABOUT TWO AND A HALF YEARS, BUT HE HAS PLAYED SOCCER SINCE HE WAS COACHED AT AGE 4 BY HIS COACH, WHO IS HERE TODAY. IT'S HIS DREAM TO BECOME A PROFESSIONAL"

**-MOTHER OF ASHTON RIGGS
SEATTLE SOUNDERS**

BEST CHEERING BANNER/OUTFIT OF THE MATCH:-



ONE-ON-ONE: REAL MADRID HEAD COACH, ALVARO LOPEZ BERMEJO

Real Madrid as the current defending champions of the tournament, coming here did you feel any pressure to keep your title, and how would you describe your experience in the Cup so far? “It’s an incredible experience. The teams’ level is very high. That’s always a challenge for us. In that side, it’s a very good experience for us. Regarding we are the current champions, it’s an incredible feeling for us, because if we look at the team that played and won last time in 2020, we can see players like Mario Martin (joined Real Valladolid), Gonzalo Garcia (now a Real Madrid Castilla player), and Niko Paz (also joined Real Valladolid last season). They’re first team players and they’re on top level. This means a lot for us, to bring these type of players here, because these players can achieve great things”.

How important are under 17 tournaments such as this in helping young footballers in achieving their dreams to become professional players? “It’s very important for us to participate in this type of tournaments, because not only are the facilities and infrastructure are amazing, all the set up around this type of events is very important for us. But also, we play against top level teams from very different countries and very different cultures. And that’s always something that brings something different and challenges us in a different way that we have in Spain. In that way, it’s super important for us to have that experience to make them grow”.

The boys are really competitive and focused on the games, but they’re also having fun while in Qatar. Can you tell us about their experience at the Sealine? “We need to always remind ourselves these are kids; they’re 16 and 17 so it’s also very important for them to also understand that we need to know the cultures of the places that we visit. So it was amazing for us to visit the city and to go to the desert; it’s a completely different set up that we are used to. We are here participating in the tournament, which is very important for us, but we also need to understand that we need to disconnect from football and enjoy the different cultures and different places that we visit”.

So many young people from across the world look up to Real Madrid, what’s your advise for them regarding reaching for their dreams? “Of course we feel a lot of support, that people look up to us everywhere we go and every airport that we step in. For us, we value and appreciate that passion and love from people from all over the world. Regarding tips and advise, basically just keep working and never quit fighting. I think that’s the key”.





RANKING SCHEDULE: 17.02.2025




| # | TEAM | PLAYED | WON | DRAW | LOSS | POINTS |
|---|--|--------|-----|------|------|--------|
| 1 |  | 3 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 6 |
| 2 |  | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 5 |
| 3 |  | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| 4 |  | 3 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 |

PHOTO OF THE DAY



| GROUP A | | GROUP B | |
|---|-----------------------|---|--------------------------|
|  | ASPIRE ACADEMY |  | REAL MADRID CF |
|  | MOHAMMED VI FA |  | PARIS SAINT GERMAIN F.C. |
|  | RANGERS FOOTBALL CLUB |  | AL AHLY FC |
|  | SEATTLE SOUNDERS FC |  | KASHIWA REYSOL |

| DATE | NO. | TEAMS | | KICK-OFF | |
|------------------------------------|--------------|--|----|--|-------|
| Thursday 13.02 | 1 | Aspire Academy  | vs | Mohammed VI FA  | 15:30 |
| | 2 | Rangers Football Club  | vs | Seattle Sounders FC  | 17:50 |
| Friday 14.02 | 3 | Real Madrid CF  | vs | Paris Saint-Germain F.C.  | 15:30 |
| | 4 | Al Ahly FC  | vs | Kashiwa Reysol  | 18:00 |
| Saturday 15.02 | 5 | Aspire Academy  | vs | Rangers Football Club  | 15:30 |
| | 6 | Mohammed VI FA  | vs | Seattle Sounders FC  | 18:00 |
| Sunday 16.02 | 7 | Real Madrid CF  | vs | Al Ahly FC  | 15:30 |
| | 8 | Paris Saint-Germain F.C.  | vs | Kashiwa Reysol  | 18:00 |
| Monday 17.02 | 9 | Aspire Academy  | vs | Seattle Sounders FC  | 15:30 |
| | 10 | Mohammed VI FA  | vs | Rangers Football Club  | 18:00 |
| Tuesday 18.02 | 11 | Real Madrid CF  | vs | Kashiwa Reysol  | 15:30 |
| | 12 | Paris Saint-Germain F.C.  | vs | Al Ahly FC  | 18:00 |
| POSITION PLAYOFF (8-5 Pos.) | | | | | |
| Wednesday 19.02 | 13 | Group A Pos. 3 | vs | Group B Pos. 3 | 15:30 |
| | 14 | Group A Pos. 4 | vs | Group B Pos. 4 | 18:15 |
| SEMI-FINAL | | | | | |
| Thursday 20.02 | 15 | Group A Pos. 1 | vs | Group B Pos. 2 | 15:30 |
| | 16 | Group B Pos. 1 | vs | Group A Pos. 2 | 18:15 |
| POSITION 4 & 3 | | | | | |
| Saturday 22.02 | 17 | Loser Game no. 15 | vs | Loser Game no. 16 | 13:15 |
| | FINAL | | | | |
| | 18 | Winner Game no. 15 | vs | Winner Game no. 16 | 16:00 |

