



## United Arab Emirates vs. Iraq (FIFA World Cup Qualifier): Preview



Iraq will travel to Abu Dhabi to face the United Arab Emirates in Matchday 5 of 2018 FIFA World Cup Qualifiers on 15 November.

Iraq are currently sitting in fifth place in their group with just three points, while UAE are one place ahead of them on six. Iraq losing their opening three games has put them in a position where this UAE game is a must-win encounter. A draw or defeat will all but signal an end to Iraq's slim hopes of making it to Russia.

UAE have already proven themselves to be a strong team when they won 2-1 against Japan away from home. They narrowly lost to Australia before comfortably dispatching of Thailand, but their most recent qualifier, a 3-0 loss to Saudi Arabia, would suggest that the UAE are beatable if the Iraqis show up on the day.

UAE's main player is of course Omar Abdulrahman, one of Asia's best players. "Amoory" has already proven to be a threat to Iraq in the past, scoring against Iraq in the 2013 Gulf Cup final and making an assist in their 2015 Asian Cup encounter. In fact, Iraq haven't won or even drawn against UAE since their 1-0 win in the 2011 Asian Cup, almost six years ago, when Younis Mahmoud's deflected shot won Iraq the game in the last minute. Their task will be made easier by the absence of UAE midfielder Amer Abdulrahman though, who has been ruled out for up to two weeks.

Radhi Shenaishil's squad for the game is mostly as expected, with Mohammed Gassid returning to the squad and taking the armband although Mohammed Hameed will most likely start between the sticks. Leading the line for Iraq will be Mohanad Abdul-Raheem, who is on fire at the moment following two goals for his new club Al-Nasr and four goals in his last match for Iraq. Questions had been asked of the 23 year old in the past but fans are finally starting to see the best of the striker. Also featuring in the squad is Swedish-based midfielder Brwa Nouri, fresh from making his Iraq debut in the 0-0 draw against Jordan on Sunday. Brwa impressed the majority of critics with his assured performance in the game and his presence in the team is certainly exciting for the supporters.



Iraq's last match against UAE was a 3-2 defeat in the 2015 Asian Cup third place playoff. [Click here](#) to see highlights of that game.

Fans will be disappointed to see that two of Iraq's best midfielders, Yaser Kasim and Ali Husni, are both not included in the squad, with both players being surrounded by controversy. Yaser Kasim's dedication and attitude was questioned by Iraqi football agent Najim Mohammed recently while Radhi Shenaishil said that Yaser lacked the desire to represent the country anymore. Meanwhile, young star Ali Husni has supposedly been omitted on the basis that he is still recovering from an injury but rumours have suggested that the player upset Radhi by refusing to undergo an MRI scan following the injury which led to his omission. Hammadi Ahmed, who scored the winning goal for Al-Quwa Al-Jawiya in the 2016 AFC Cup Final on Saturday his 16th in the competition), also misses out and the player recently stated his desire to retire from international football following his lack of playing opportunities.

Iraq will most likely stick to their 4-2-3-1 formation, but one dilemma for Radhi Shenaishil will be what to do with Ali Adnan. Assuming the 4-2-3-1 formation stays, he has to decide whether he wants to play Adnan at left-back and drop Dhurgham to the bench (or move Dhurgham to right-back where he is unfamiliar), whether he wants to play Adnan on the wing and drop either Ahmed Yasin or Justin Meram, or indeed whether he wants to play the Udinese star at all.

Justin has been on fire at club level but Yasin has struggled for game time, so that might play a role in Radhi's decision. Alaa Abdul-Zahra will most likely be played behind the striker Mohanad, while Saad Abdul-Amir and Brwa Nouri could make up the central midfield, although Radhi may consider it too early to throw Brwa into such a huge game considering he only has one cap to his name. The central midfielders and the wingers will need to ensure they keep a high defensive workrate to stop Omar Abdulrahman exploiting Iraq, especially on the break as Iraq's full-backs are particularly attacking. Ahmed Ibrahim will certainly start in central defence but his partner could be any from Rebin Sulaka, Saad Natiq or Mustafa Nadhim, while Alaa Mhawi will most likely keep his right-back spot ahead of Al-Shorta's Waleed Salem.

All in all, Iraq are set for a very difficult game of football away from home in Abu Dhabi. Every player will need to step up to the occasion on Tuesday if Iraq are to have a chance of taking maximum points from the game. If the Lions of Mesopotamia lose any points here, the journey is effectively over so that should provide the motivation for the players to put out a good performance for the great nation of Iraq.

### Full squad:

Player	Position	Club
Mohammed Gassid (captain)	Goalkeeper	Al-Zawraa
Mohammed Hameed	Goalkeeper	Naft Al-Wasat
Ali Abdul-Hassan	Goalkeeper	Al-Talaba
Ahmed Ibrahim	Defender	Emirates Club (UAE)
Ali Adnan	Defender	Udinese (Italy)

Dhurgham Ismail Player	Defender Position	Çaykur Rizespor (Turkey) Club
Waleed Salem	Defender	Al-Shorta
Rebin Sulaka	Defender	Elverum Fotball (Norway)
Mustafa Nadhim	Defender	Naft Al-Wasat
Saad Natiq	Defender	Al-Quwa Al-Jawiya
Alaa Mhawi	Defender	Al-Zawraa
Saad Abdul-Amir	Midfielder	Al-Qadisiyah (Saudi Arabia)
Ahmed Yasin	Midfielder	AIK (Sweden)
Mahdi Kamil	Midfielder	Al-Shorta
Amjad Attwan	Midfielder	Naft Al-Wasat
Bashar Rasan	Midfielder	Al-Quwa Al-Jawiya
Brwa Nouri	Midfielder	Ostersunds FK (Sweden)
Alaa Abdul-Zahra (vice-captain)	Forward	Al-Zawraa
Mohanad Abdul-Raheem	Forward	Al-Nasr (UAE)
Justin Meram	Forward	Columbus Crew (USA)
Jassim Mohammed	Forward	Al-Shorta
Ayman Hussein	Forward	Al-Naft
Mohammed Jabbar Shokan	Forward	Al-Minaa