

## Iraq's 2007 Asian Cup Winning Squad: Where are they now?



Exactly a decade on from the Iraq national football team producing the greatest moment in Iraqi sporting history, overcoming rivals Saudi Arabia to win Asia's most coveted trophy and bring joy to millions around the world, we commemorate the achievement by taking a look at what the men who achieved the impossible dream are up to now.



### GK: Noor Sabri

The heroic keeper has played for nine Iraqi clubs since 2007, famously winning his first Iraqi Premier League with Naft Al-Wasat in 2015, saving three penalties in a shootout against former club Al-Quwa Al-Jawiya in the final to secure the title for the newly-promoted side. He most recently played for Al-Minaa, and is now a free agent, having retired from international football last year.



### DF: Bassim Abbas

The 'Iraqi Roberto Carlos' continued to be a key player for Iraq up until 2012; in 2009 he earned himself a move to Europe, playing in the Turkish Superligue with Diyarbakirspor and Konyaspor. Bassim's success there led to Turkish sides increasingly scouting Iraqi talent, paving the way for Ali Adnan, Dhurgham Ismail, Ali Husni and Ali Faez to move there too. Bassim has since retired from football and is now an administrator at boyhood club Al-Talaba.



### DF: Jassim Mohammed Ghulam

'The Beast' enjoyed spells at Qatar, Iran and Jordan after the Asian Cup win before returning to Iraqi club Al-Quwa Al-Jawiya in 2009. However his career effectively ended when he infamously received a one-year ban from football after trying to assault a referee in the Iraqi El Clasico in the 2010/11 season; he is now the assistant manager of AFC Cup holders Al-Quwa Al-Jawiya.



### DF: Ali Hussein Rehema

Ali, only 21 back in 2007, spent nine more years representing the national team before retiring from international football in 2016. He earned himself a move abroad to Al-Ahly of Libya in 2007, and a year later signed for Qatari side Al-Wakrah where he spent the next nine years of his career, finally leaving the club in 2017. He is currently a free agent and is being linked with moves to Al-Shorta and Al-Quwa Al-Jawiya.



### DF: Haidar Abdul-Amir

Haidar's international career only lasted three more years, but the 34 year-old is still going at club level. Following a two-year spell in Jordan, the right-back returned to Al-Zawraa where he won the 2010/11 and 2015/16 Iraqi League titles, the latter as club captain.



### DF: Khaldoon Ibrahim

The centre-back who was later converted into a central midfielder was just 20 years of age when he won the Asian Cup with Iraq. He continued to be an important national team player for the next six years, playing numerous times during 2014 World Cup Qualifying. Now 30 years of age, he is playing for Iraqi League side Naft Al-Wasat.



### MF: Qusay Munir

Qusay, one of Iraq's greatest ever midfielders, remained at the heart of Iraq's team all the way up until 2013 when he announced his retirement from international football, leaving a void in the national side that has yet to be filled. At club level he enjoyed spells in UAE and Qatar before returning to Iraq where he won the league



with Al-Shorta. He is now the manager of Iraq Division 1 side Al-Diwaniya, currently one of the favourites for promotion.



**MF: Nashat Akram**

The Maestro, arguably Iraq's all-time greatest playmaker, also continued playing for Iraq until 2013. His partnership with Younis Mahmoud terrorised defences across Asia, and he scored numerous goals in 2014 WCQ as Iraq reached the final round. His Asian Cup heroics caught the eye of Sven Goran-Eriksson, then manager of Manchester City, but the move was called off due to work permit issues. Nashat went on to win the Eredivisie with FC Twente but injuries saw him move back to the Gulf, winning the Qatari League with Al-Gharafa and the Iraqi League with Al-Shorta. He retired from football in 2015 and now works as a pundit.



**MF: Salih Sadir**

Fan favourite Salih Sadir spent the next four years of his career in Lebanon and Iran before returning to Iraq; the 35 year-old now plays for Naft Al-Wasat where he is still a key player, although he has since retired from international football where he racked up 61 caps.



**MF: Haitham Kadhim**

The midfielder fell out of favour with Iraqi fans after a poor performance in a 2010 World Cup qualifier against Qatar that saw Iraq crash out at the first round. After a spell in Iran, Haitham returned to Iraq with Al-Quwa Al-Jawiya, where he finished as 2014/15 Iraqi League runners-up. After helping the club win the Iraqi FA Cup in 2016, he announced his retirement from football and is now trying to obtain his coaching badges.



**MF: Ahmed Abid Ali**

Ahmed Abid Ali, commonly known as Ahmed Kobi, never saw his international career really kick off after the Asian Cup and didn't manage to earn a move abroad like the majority of other players. The midfielder won two consecutive league titles with Erbil before various spells at other Iraqi clubs. He now lives in the USA where he plays football for a local side.



**MF: Ali Abbas**

Ali's career took an interesting turn in November 2007 when he grabbed headlines for secretly seeking asylum in Australia after playing there for the Iraq Olympic side, eventually getting his move to Australian side Marconi Stallions. He then spent three years at Newcastle Jets and four at Sydney FC where he became a fan favourite, before an unsuccessful spell at Pohang Steelers in South Korea. Ali wasn't called up for seven years after the Asian Cup win for secretly leaving the Olympic team's camp, but he eventually returned to the national team although remains a bit-part player.



**MF: Hawar Mulla Mohammed**

Hawar made history in 2008 becoming the first Iraqi player to both feature and score in the UEFA Champions League, netting a header for Cypriot side Anorthosis Famagusta against Panathinaikos. The Kurd retired from international football in 2012 with 112 caps (7th most in Iraq's history) and 19 goals; he spent the last years of his career at Erbil and Al-Quwa Al-Jawiya before retiring in 2015.



**MF: Karrar Jassim**

Karrar was only 20 years old but already a key player for the national team in 2007. That continued as he scored the goal that secured Iraq qualification to the 2011 Asian Cup quarter-finals and played a key role in getting Iraq to the final stage of 2014 World Cup Qualifying with a memorable performance in the 3-1 win over Jordan. He recently joined Iraqi side Naft Al-Wasat from Iranian side Esteghlal and some fans have been calling for the 30 year-old to be recalled to the national team.



**MF: Mahdi Karim**

The right-winger was turned into a right-back by German coach Wolfgang Sidka and earned a move to Libya after his great performances in the Asian Cup. He continued at right-back for Iraq up until 2014, when he was surprisingly dropped from the squad by Radhi Shenaishil ahead of the 2015 Asian Cup. The 33 year-old has won two Iraqi League titles since 2007 (with Erbil and Al-Shorta) and now plies his trade at Baghdad-based Al-Talaba.



**FW: Mohammed Nasser**

Mohammed only made around ten starts for the Iraq national side during his career, none of them during the 2007 Asian Cup, but nonetheless did spend a large portion of his career abroad at Cyprus and Iran. He retired from football a few years ago and now works as a coach at Al-Minaa.



**FW: Ahmed Mnajed**

The 2002/03 Iraqi League Golden Boot winner, who scored a vital penalty in the 2007 Asian Cup semi-final shootout against South Korea, played for clubs in Lebanon and Syria before returning to Iraq where he featured for Duhok and Al-Talaba. His career petered out as he entered his thirties and in April 2016, he announced his retirement.



#### **FW: Younis Mahmoud (captain)**

Arguably Iraq's greatest ever player, 'the Assassin', scorer of the 2007 Asian Cup winning goal and winner of both the tournament's MVP and top scorer awards, went on to become Iraq's most-capped player with 148 appearances and their third-highest scorer with 57 goals, being nominated for the 2007 Ballon D'Or. In 2015, he became the only player in history to score in four Asian Cups, scoring a crucial goal in the 2015 Asian Cup against Iran, with an unbelievable Panenka penalty in the shootout, to send Iraq to the semis. Younis broke record after record in Qatar, winning league titles and Golden Boots for fun and even scoring two hattricks in the same game. The legend became one of Asia's all-time greats and continued banging in the goals for Iraq

all the way until his retirement 2016, leaving behind a legacy that likely no player will ever replicate for Iraq. The Desert Fox's ambition now is to become the president of the Iraq Football Association.



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