

# HAARETZ

## **The Time Egypt Celebrated Making It to the World Cup After Victory in Tel Aviv**

In 1934, Egypt's finest soccer player, El-Tetsh, led the national team to qualify for the World Cup – in a game in the heart of the first Hebrew city

Omer Eynav Jun 15, 2018 10:53 AM

Consider what the following description brings to mind. The best Egyptian soccer player of his generation is in a Tel Aviv stadium for the return match in the qualifying stage. The sudden-death rule is in force, so the winner will advance to the most prestigious tournament of all. He scores a goal to help his team win, to the bitter disappointment of the local fans, whose compensation, for what it's worth, is that they've seen a soccer display they'll long remember.

What comes to mind immediately is Mohamed Salah in the uniform of the FC Basel team, playing against Maccabi Tel Aviv in a Champions League game at Jaffa's Bloomfield Stadium in August 2013. The Egyptian star bumped fists with the Maccabi players instead of shaking hands, to protest the Israeli occupation and as a demonstration of solidarity with the Palestinian people.

But even before the star of the Liverpool forward (as he is now) blazed across the local sky, the greatest Egyptian soccer player of all time was widely considered to be Mahmoud Mokhtar, known as "El-Tetsh." Born in Cairo in 1905, Mokhtar spent his entire career playing for the city's great Al Ahly club and for the Egyptian national team. After retiring, he coached the team he'd played for and afterward served as head of the Egyptian Olympic Committee. Following his death, in 1965, what was then Cairo's principal stadium, where he played throughout his career, was named after him. Mokhtar acquired the nickname El-Tetsh – colloquial Egyptian Arabic for an infant taking his first steps – because he was short and liked to jump. We'll get to his unforgettable performance in Tel Aviv later.

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