

Kingdom awaits

Scotsman's next shot

Hill Clings to Lead as Bahrain Championship Heads for Final-Day Decider

Hussain Maskati
TDT | Manama

Scotland's Calum Hill held his nerve during yesterday's third round at the BAPCO Energies Bahrain Championship, maintaining a slim advantage at the top of the leaderboard as the tournament moves to its decisive stage today.

Hill signed for a level-par 72 at Royal Golf Club to remain 16 under par, a contrast to the brilliance of his earlier rounds but a score that underlined his growing maturity in contention. While momentum briefly swung away from him early in the round, the Scot steadied himself on a demanding setup that tested patience as much as precision.

"I actually felt like I played quite nicely," Hill said. "I just had a few errors in there and misjudged a couple of putts early on that put me behind a little bit. I managed to come back on the back nine and put myself in a good position."

With pins tucked and subtle winds complicating approaches, Hill acknowledged it was not a day for chasing numbers. "Honestly, it was really tricky on and around the greens. It didn't feel like a day where, personally, I could shoot really low," he added, noting that simply regaining level par by the end of the round felt like a small victory in itself.

Germany's Freddy Schott



Calum Hill watches his shot settle

ensured the pressure remains firmly on the leader after closing the gap to two shots. Schott carded a steady two-under-par 70 to move to 14 under overall, briefly drawing level with Hill early in the round as the Scot found his rhythm.

"I didn't think about it too much being four shots behind," Schott said. "I just thought it might be a two-day thing. All of a sudden, we were there together." Despite a late three-putt on the final green, the German remained upbeat, adding: "It was a good day. We'll just keep doing what we're doing."

Behind the leading pair, the chasing pack tightened considerably. Patrick Reed surged into contention with one of the standout performances of the day, firing a six-under-par 66 to reach 12 under. The American,

fresh from victory at last week's Hero Dubai Desert Classic, suddenly looks a serious factor once again.

Sharing third place with Reed is Spain's Sergio Garcia, who continued his upward trajectory with a four-under round that reflected improving confidence in his game. "Today I played better than yesterday," Garcia said. "I felt like I hit the ball better, got off to a nice start, and in the middle of the round I started getting hot." Although several putts refused to drop late on, the former Masters champion left the course encouraged by his progress.

Scotland's Grant Forrest also remains firmly in the mix at 12 under after a five-under effort, further underlining the depth of contention heading into the closing chapter. With defend-

ing champion Laurie Canter drifting down the standings and 2024 winner Dylan Fritelli already eliminated earlier in the week, the championship is guaranteed to produce a new winner. Hill, however, remains calm about the task ahead.

"If at the start of the week you said I'd have a couple of shots going into Sunday, I'd be delighted," he said. "I'm in control of what happens. If I play half-decent, I give myself a good chance."

Held under the patronage of HM King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, the championship has continued to draw strong crowds, with spectators once again filling the Royal Golf Club and the Championship Village, adding to the sense that a memorable conclusion awaits in the Kingdom.

Arsenal thrash Leeds to stretch Premier League advantage

Leeds, United Kingdom

Arsenal settled any fears of a wobble in their pursuit of a first Premier League title in 22 years by winning 4-0 at Leeds on Saturday.

The Gunners' advantage over Manchester City and Aston Villa, who are both in action on Sunday, stretches to seven points as Mikel Arteta's men took another step towards the title at Elland Road.

A first home defeat of the season last weekend to Manchester United capped a run of just two points from a possible nine in Arsenal's previous three league games.

After finishing runners-up for the past three seasons, questions were raised over the mentality of Arteta's men to get over the line in a title race.

The visitors were dealt another blow before kick-off as Bukayo Saka was injured in the warm-up.

But his replacement Noni Madueke played a major part in inflicting just a second defeat in 12 games on Leeds.

Madueke's cross was head-

ed in by Martin Zubimendi to open the scoring.

Leeds goalkeeper Karl Darlow could then only parry another dangerous delivery from the England winger into his own goal before half-time.

Despite a fine run of form, Leeds remain only six points above the relegation zone.

Their first defeat at home since November was confirmed when the much-criticised Viktor Gyokeres latched onto Gabriel Martinelli's cross to blast in his 11th goal since joining Arsenal from Sporting Lisbon.

Gabriel Jesus came off the bench to round off the scoring with a blistering strike four minutes from time.

Arsenal will be hoping local rivals Tottenham can do them a favour when City visit north London, while Villa host Brentford on Sunday.

Chelsea can climb into the top four later should they maintain their bright start under Liam Rosenior against West Ham at Stamford Bridge.

Liverpool are aiming to ease the pressure on Arne Slot at Anfield in Saturday's late kick-

Leeds United's US midfielder #11 Brenden Aaronson (C) vies with Arsenal's French defender #02 William Saliba (R)



Ice-cool Rybakina beats Sabalenka in tense Australian Open final



Kazakhstan's Elena Rybakina (L) celebrates with the Daphne Akhurst Memorial Cup after her victory against Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka (R) during the women's singles final match on day fourteen of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne

AFP | Melbourne, Australia

Elena Rybakina took revenge over world number one Aryna Sabalenka to win a nail-biting Australian Open final on Saturday and clinch her second Grand Slam title.

The big-serving Kazakh fifth seed held her nerve to pull through 6-4, 4-6, 6-4 at Rod Laver Arena in Melbourne in 2hrs 18mins.

It was payback after the Belarusian Sabalenka won the 2023 final between two of the hardest hitters in women's tennis. The ice-cool Rybakina, 26, who was born in Moscow, adds her Melbourne triumph to her Wimbledon win in 2022.

"Hard to find the words now," said Rybakina, and then addressed her beaten opponent to add: "I know it is tough, but I hope we play many more finals together."

Turning to some Kazakh fans in the crowd, she said:

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Elena Rybakina is a Russian-born professional tennis player who represents Kazakhstan and became the first player from Kazakhstan to win a Grand Slam title when she captured the women's singles title at Wimbledon in 2022.

"Thank you so much to Kazakhstan. I felt the support from that corner a lot."

It was more disappointment in a major final for Sabalenka, who won the US Open last year for the second time but lost the French Open and Melbourne title deciders. She was into her fourth Australian Open final in a row and had been imperious until now, with tears in her eyes at the end.

Pakistan spin out Australia in second T20I to take series



Pakistan's players celebrate after the dismissal of Australia's Cooper Connolly during the second Twenty20 international cricket match between Pakistan and Australia at the Gaddafi Cricket Stadium in Lahore

AFP | Lahore, Pakistan

Skippers Salman Agha hit his highest score in the shortest format before Pakistan's spinners routed Australia by 90 runs in the second Twenty20 international in Lahore on Saturday.

Agha hit a 40-ball 76 and Usman Khan smashed a 36-ball 53 as Pakistan made 198-5, their highest-ever T20I total

against Australia.

This was enough for Pakistan's spin quintet who shared all ten wickets between them with Abrar Ahmed returning the best figures of 3-14 and Shadab Khan finishing with 3-26.

Australia were routed for 108 in 15.4 overs, giving Pakistan their biggest T20I victory over Australia eclipsing the 66-run win in Abu Dhabi in 2018.

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