

Al Najma crowned handball league champions

Back-to-back winners claim hard-earned victory over Barbar in hotly contested final

● **Komail Mahfoodh, Mahdi Saad top score for victors with six goals apiece**

● **Najma take 16-11 lead at half and then do enough in final 30 minutes to seal the win**

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Al Najma were last night crowned back-to-back champions of the Bahrain First Division Volleyball League.

Najma captured the coveted title after defeating Barbar 31-24 in a tightly contested final, which was played at the Bahrain Handball Association (BHA) arena in Um Al Hassam.

With the result, the victors claimed their fifth title in the history of the league.

They won last year's crown following a penalty shootout decision over Al Shabab. This year, however, they didn't require to go beyond the hour-long contest.

Right after the final, the two teams were awarded their respective trophies and medals in a podium ceremony attended by BHA officials.

Goalkeeper Mohammed Abdulhussan was in brilliant form



Najma players and team officials celebrate with their champions' trophy during the awarding ceremony

for Najma last night, making a number of crucial saves in the game's closing stages. None were bigger than his successive stops late in the second half that helped his team preserve a 26-21 advantage, with Barbar looking to make one final push to fight back.

Veteran Jaffar Abdulqader did his best to keep Barbar in the game, but Najma were just too good on the night and goals from Bilal Basham and Komail Mahfoodh put them ahead 29-24.

Abdulla Abdulkarim then pegged the final score with the game's last goal.

Najma were already in control of the contest in the first half, taking a 16-11 lead into the locker

rooms.

For Najma, Abdulhussan had plenty of help from the offensive end. Mahfoodh and Mahdi Saad shared the honours of joint-top scorers in the win with six goals apiece, while Ali Eid contributed five. They also got big contributions from Hasan Madan, Mohammed Mirza and Ali Mirza, among others.

For Barbar, Jaffar Abdulqader was the game's top scorer in the loss. He finished with seven goals.

Meanwhile, taking the league's bronze medals were Al Ahli. They claimed third place overall following a 34-24 win over Samaheej in their final classification contest held on Tuesday.



Al Najma have secured five league titles with yesterday's result. That kept them fourth on the all-time list in the Bahrain league, where Al Ahli lead with 18 titles, followed by Al Wehda Club with eight and Barbar with six



Komail Mahfoodh tries to score against Barbar in Najma's win last night

Bahrain to learn of Tokyo Olympics groupings today

Bahrain's senior men's national handball team will today learn of their grouping for the opening stage of the Men's Handball Tournament at the Tokyo Olympic Games.

The official draw will take place in the International Handball Federation (IHF) head office in Basel, Switzerland. It will be held virtually and will be streamed live online.

The Bahrainis are making their historic first-ever appearance at any Olympics. They

have been seeded in Row 6 for the draw. They are joined by their counterparts from Argentina in the same row.

Row one comprises Denmark and Norway, row two features France and Sweden, row three includes Germany and Portugal, row four features Brazil and hosts Japan, while row five sees Spain and Egypt.

The final seedings were determined following the completion of the Tokyo Handball Qualification Tournament.

The Bahrainis booked their berth at the Tokyo Games after winning the Men's Asian Qualification Tournament held in Doha in October of 2019, defeating South Korea in the final.

The nationals are to be coached at the Olympics by Icelandic tactician Aron Kristjansson. Kristjansson is no stranger to Bahraini handball. He was responsible for steering the nationals to their historic first-ever Olympic berth.

BIKC to host back-to-back nights of exciting Rotax karting action



Participants in action during a race (file photo)

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Bahrain International Circuit (BIC) is set to host back-to-back nights of exciting karting battles on Thursday and Friday (Editor's note: April 1 and 2) as the action never stops at "The Home of Motorsport in the Middle East" in Sakhir.

BIC's world-class karting facility, Bahrain International Karting Circuit (BIKC), will be the setting of the second and third rounds of the 2021 Bahrain Karting Sprint Championship (BKSC), featuring the Bahrain Rotax Max Challenge (BRMC).

High-octane racing will be held along BIKC's 1.414-kilometre CIK-FIA track and it will feature competition in the BRMC's various categories, including the Senior Max, Max Masters, Junior Max, Mini Max and Micro Max.

All the proceedings will be

run with strict health protection measures in place, in line with government regulations and guidance.

Both rounds are to take place under BIKC's bright floodlights, starting from 5pm and concluding with the podium ceremonies at around 8.30pm.

They follow a thrilling first round held in mid-March, in which Fahad Alkhaled (Senior Max), Fahad Almuqla (Junior Max), Luca Houghton (Mini Max) and Shaikh Rashid bin Salman Al Khalifa (Micro Max) clinched their respective victories in class.

All the karters will be racing in Rotax karts and will be gunning for wins, podiums, points and bragging rights in one of the most competitive karting championships in the entire Gulf.

For more information on the back-to-back events or on BIKC, visit bahraingp.com.

Al-Silawi, Naurdiev come close to starting brawl at BRAVE CF 50 face-offs

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BRAVE CF 50 headliners Jarrah Al-Silawi and Ismail Naurdiev were very close to starting their fight one day early during the official face-offs for the historic event.

BRAVE CF Super Welterweight champion Al-Silawi and his challenger Naurdiev will headline the historic BRAVE CF 50, which goes down this Thursday at the beautiful Arad Fort, in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Both men made weight under the Super Welterweight limit of 175 lbs (79,4 kg), with Jarrah coming in at 174,4 lbs or 79,1 kg, and Naurdiev stepping on the scale at 174,6 lbs or 79,2 kg.

A few minutes later, as they faced off they brought the heat that's expected to be all over the BRAVE CF Arena tomorrow. Al-Silawi and Naurdiev touched foreheads and exchanged trash talk before the champ used his hand to push the challenger's face away, and the two were immediately separated by BRAVE CF staff before an all-out brawl was initiated.

In the co-main event, Middleweight champion Mohammad Fakhreddine, attempting to become the first Arab fighter to be a two-weight world champion, stepped in the scales for the vacant Light Heavyweight title fight at 203lbs or 92,1 kg, while his opponent Mohammed Said Maalem weighed in at 201,9 lbs or 91,6 kg.

Both men also had an intense staredown, sizing each other up in the last contact before fight night. Fakhreddine never took his eyes off Said Maalem, even when the two posed for pictures post-staredown.

In total, two fighters missed weight as Brad Katona will give Borislav Nikolic 30% of his purse, while Maciej Gierszewski will take 20% of Felipe Silva's purse - Katona and Silva both missed weight for their respective bouts. BRAVE CF 50 will officially put BRAVE Combat Federation as the only organization in mixed martial arts to have traveled to 21 countries in its first 50 events.



Jarrah Al-Silawi and Ismail Naurdiev

BRAVE CF 50 Weigh-In results

Super Welterweight Title - Jarrah Al-Silawi (79,1 kg) vs Ismail Naurdiev (79,2 kg)

Light Heavyweight Title - Mohammad Fakhreddine (92,1 kg) vs Mohamed Said Maalem (91,6 kg)

Flyweight - Ali Bagautinov (57,1 kg) vs Dustin Ortiz (56,6 kg)

Flyweight - Velimurad Alkhasov (57 kg) vs Zach Makovsky (57 kg)

Catchweight 74KG - Amin Ayoub (73,9 kg) vs Mashrabjon Ruziboev (74 kg)

Super Lightweight - Issa Isakov (75 kg) vs Marcel Grabinski (74,8 kg)

Super Welterweight - Kevin Ruart (79,6 kg) vs Louis Glismann (79,6 kg)

Featherweight - Valeriu Mircea (66 kg) vs Omar Solomanov (66,2 kg)

Catchweight 95KG - Anton Turkalj (94,6 kg) vs Konstantin Soldatov (94,4 kg)

Bantamweight - Brad Katona (62,5 kg)* vs Borislav Nikolic (61,5 kg)

Middleweight - Rustam Chsiev (84,1 kg) vs Brendan Lesar (84 kg)

Catchweight 77KG - Carl Booth (76 kg) vs Carlos Belloso (77 kg)

Bantamweight - Bair Shtepin (61,3 kg) vs Alexander Keshtov (61,7 kg)

Featherweight - Shoab Yousaf (66,2 kg) vs Steven Goncalves (65,8 kg)

Catchweight 73KG - Felipe Silva (75,4 kg)* vs Maciej Gierszewski (72,9 kg)

Lightweight - Magomed Magomedov (70,6 kg) vs Yann Liasse (70,8 kg)

Featherweight - Abdulmanap Magomedov (65,8 kg) vs Glenn McVeigh (66,2 kg)

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