

## Alonso fastest in wet Australian second practice, Verstappen third



Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso drives during the second practice session  
AFP | Melbourne

Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso went quickest ahead of Ferrari ace Charles Leclerc in a rain-interrupted second practice at the Australian Grand Prix yesterday, with defending world champion Max Verstappen third.

The Spanish veteran followed up his podium finishes at the first two races of the season in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia by topping the Melbourne timesheets.

He powered around the bumpy Albert Park circuit under darkening clouds and before rain fell in a best time of one minute 18.887 seconds among his 13 laps, bettering his fourth place in the first one-hour session.

Leclerc, who won in Australia last year, came an encouraging second after Ferrari's early season reliability and pace issues, nearly half a second

**”** I think the forecast is dry, so I think ideally we will prefer dry conditions because we've only driven this car in dry conditions in Jeddah and in Bahrain

FERNANDO ALONSO

adrift but ahead of Verstappen.

The Red Bull pilot, the early championship leader, clocked a 1:18.790 in the first practice when he had an out-of-character spin, which was better than Alonso's second session best.

But the Dutchman had no decent opportunity to improve on it on a wet track.

Red Bull are attempting to score a third consecutive 1-2 finish for the first time in the team's history in Melbourne after their dominance in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia.

Verstappen's teammate and Jeddah winner Sergio Perez came seventh.

Seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton was a surprise second in the opening practice but could only manage a disappointing 13th in FP2.

His teammate George Russell was fourth ahead of Ferrari's Carlos Sainz, with Alpine's Esteban Ocon sixth.

McLaren's Lando Norris, Haas driver Nico Hulkenberg and Pierre Gasly in the other Alpine rounded out the top 10.

Williams' Logan Sargeant, who had an electrical problem during the first practice, failed to complete a lap.



Virtually all the cars headed back to the pits with 40 minutes remaining after Norris ran onto the grass at Turn 1 when his grip failed and Lance Stroll tapped a wall in his Aston Martin

# Bahrain to host U21 world volleyball action

16 national teams from five confederations around the world to compete in July

● Prestigious global volleyball tournament slated for 7 to 16 July

● Bahrainis in preliminary round Pool A with Iran, Thailand, Tunisia

TDT | Manama

Bahrain is set to host the FIVB Men's U21 World Championship this summer.

The tournament is set to be held from 7 to 16 July, and it will feature 16 teams from five confederations around the world.

Matches will be played at the Isa bin Rashid Arena at the Bahrain Volleyball Association headquarters at Isa Sports City in Riffa.

The competition is the premier tournament for junior national teams organised by the Federation Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB), the sport's global governing body.

This year will mark the fourth time the Kingdom is staging the prestigious event. Bahrain first hosted the under-21 worlds in 1987, and then did so again in 1997 and most recently in 2019.

Bahrain are also taking part in the world championship having qualified as hosts.

The competing field has been divided into four pools for the preliminary round. The draw to determine each group was conducted yesterday by the FIVB.

The Bahrainis are in Pool A along with Iran, Thailand and Tunisia. Pool B features defending champions Italy, Brazil, Egypt and Mexico. Pool C



Bahrain's junior national team during the 2019 under-21 worlds held in the Kingdom (File photo)

### Draw results

POOL A	POOL B	POOL C	POOL D
BRN	ITA	POL	ARG
IRI	BRA	BUL	BEL
THA	EGY	CAN	CZE
TUN	MEX	IND	USA

**YOU KNOW WHAT**

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consists of Poland, Bulgaria, Canada and India; while Pool D comprises Argentina, Belgium, the Czech Republic and the US.

The top two teams from each pool will advance to round-robin Pools E and F of the second phase, while the rest will move to Pools G and H to continue the battles for classification from eighth to 16th. The winners and

runners-up of Pools E and F will progress to the semi-finals and eventually determine the medalists.

Bahrain are set to compete for the sixth time in the history of the under-21 worlds. They have contested in both previous editions in 2019 at home and in 2021, while also playing in 1987, 1989 and 1997. Their best finish was eighth, twice in 1987 and 2019. In the last tournament, the nationals placed 14th.

Italy claimed the 2021 gold

medals after defeating Russia in three sets in the final. Poland captured the bronze medals after beating Argentina in the game for third place.

Bahrain have once again been selected as the venue for a top global or Asian competition.

Next month, the Kingdom will also be staging the 2023 Asian Men's Club Volleyball Championship from 14 to 21 May. Last year, Bahrain hosted the 21st Asian Men's U20 Volleyball Championship.

## Gujarat win IPL opener in front of more than 100,000 fans

AFP | Ahmedabad

Opener Shubman Gill smashed 63 as holders Gujarat Titans beat Chennai Super Kings by five wickets in the Indian Premier League opener in front of more than 100,000 fans in Ahmedabad yesterday.

Chasing 179 for victory, Gujarat rode on Gill's 36-ball knock to achieve their target with four balls to spare at the world's biggest cricket stadium and their home ground.

The 16th edition of the money-spinning T20 tournament began with a glitzy opening ceremony and fireworks at a ground which has an official capacity of 132,000.

A roar erupted when home captain Hardik Pandya won the toss and elected to field first but it was Chennai opener Ru-turaj



Shubman Gill of Gujarat Titans plays a shot

Gaikwad who soon silenced the home fans with a flurry of boundaries in his 92 off 50 balls.

Ruturaj lost partners Moeen Ali for 23 and then new signing Ben Stokes -- the England all-rounder brought for \$1.96 million in the auction -- for seven but kept up the attack against the opposition bowlers.

But Mohammed Shami, who reached 100 IPL wickets, Rashid Khan and Alzarri Joseph took two wickets each to check the opposition scoring.

Gujarat suffered a blow when new overseas player Kane Williamson jarred his knee while attempting a catch at the boundary and limped off the ground.

Sai Sudharsan replaced Williamson under the new "impact player" rule, which was also taken by Chennai, who replaced Ambati Rayudu with pace bowler Tushar Deshpande before they fielded.

## Bahrain Club through to Khalifa bin Salman Cup quarters

● Bahrain Club oust Samaheej, set up clash with Manama in round of eight

TDT | Manama

Bahrain Club have advanced to the quarter-finals of the 2022/2023 Khalifa bin Salman Cup.

They booked their berth with a 79-68 win over Samaheej.

Ali Abbas had 25 points, including five three-pointers, to help spearhead his team while Tony Mitchell added 19 and Ali Asghar had 11 for Bahrain Club.

Ahmed Fateel scored 18 to pace Samaheej in the loss, while Basel Adel scored 16.

Bahrain Club now move on to face Manama in the round of eight. Elsewhere in the same stage, three-time defending cup champions Al Ahli are set for



Bahrain Club's Tony Mitchell goes for a lay-up against Samaheej in their game

an exciting clash against Al Etihad tonight, scheduled for a 9.30pm tip-off. Also in the quarter-finals, Al Hala will be playing Muharraq.

Sitra are already through to the semi-finals, and await the winner of the Hala-Muharraq match-up.

This year's competition is the seventh edition of the Khalifa bin Salman Cup, which is held in honour of the late His Royal Highness Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa. Ahli are looking to add to their triumphs in 2020, 2021 and 2022 with an historic "four-peat" this season.