

Bahrain settle for Asian silver

Qatar deny Kingdom’s youngsters a third title in Amman final

Hussain Almaskati

Bahrain’s hopes of securing a third Asian youth crown ended last night after they suffered a 28-24 defeat to Qatar in the final of the 11th Asian Men’s Youth Handball Championship in Amman, Jordan.

The kingdom’s under-19 side entered the gold medal showdown at Princess Sumaya Hall with a perfect record, but a difficult opening half left them with too much ground to recover despite a spirited response after the break.

Qatar held a 16-10 advantage at half-time before Bahrain outscored their Gulf rivals 14-12 in the second period, eventually having to settle for silver as Khaled Aly’s side lifted the trophy for a third time.

The result was Bahrain’s first defeat of the campaign and also their first in an Asian youth final, having won the title on both of their previous appearances in the championship-decider in 2016 and 2018.

Despite the disappointment, Mohamed Soliman’s youngsters concluded an impressive campaign, having also secured qualification for next year’s IHF Men’s Youth Handball World Championship.

Bahrain briefly held the upper hand during the opening exchanges of last night’s contest.

After Qatar struck twice inside the opening three minutes, Sayed Majeed Almuhafta responded with two goals before Mahmood Ahmed found the net to put the nationals 3-2 ahead.

Their advantage was short-lived as Qatar replied with four unanswered goals to move 6-3 in front, before gradually beginning to take control.

Bahrain were also frustrated from the seven-metre line, with Qatar goalkeeper Omar Elsayed denying Sayed Omran Almahafdh and Ahmed Abdulla from penalties during the first half.

The Qataris capitalised at the other end and stretched their



Qatar pose with their gold medals and championship trophy



Yousef Hussein rises to shoot over Mahmood Ahmed

lead to 11-4 by the 21st minute.

Bahrain managed to steady themselves late in the period, with Mahdi Ali scoring twice while Mohamed Marzooq and Hasan Saif also found the net, but they still went into the interval six goals behind.

The young Warriors emerged with renewed purpose after the restart.

Hussain Abadi, Wadee Hasan and Marzooq scored without reply as Bahrain quickly reduced the deficit to 16-13, giving themselves a route back into the contest.

Qatar halted that momentum and restored their six-goal cushion

at 19-13, but Bahrain continued to battle.

Ali Hasan and Sayed Ali Ebrahim struck in quick succession to make it 21-17, before Almahafdh and Abdulla cut the gap further to 22-19 with just over 10 minutes remaining.

Another missed seven-metre opportunity stalled the comeback, however, and Qatar responded with two straight goals to regain breathing room at 24-19.

The eventual champions then pulled seven clear at 27-20 with five minutes left, leaving Bahrain with too much to do.

Soliman’s men nevertheless

finished strongly, scoring four of the next five goals. Abdulla struck twice before Almahafdh and Ali found the net in quick succession to reduce the final margin to four.

Hasan, Almahafdh, Ali and Abdulla shared Bahrain’s scoring honours with three goals apiece, while Almuhafta, Marzooq and Saif contributed two each.

Bahrain were left to rue their struggles from the seven-metre line after failing to convert any of their five penalties. Elsayed saved three of those attempts and finished the contest with 10 stops overall.

Youssef Elgaabary led Qatar with eight goals from nine attempts, while Moaaz Saber and Abdallah Hassan added five each.

There was further recognition for Bahrain after the final, with Mohamed Fathi Al Marzooq named the tournament’s Best Left Wing, while Ahmed Ayyad received the Best Playmaker award for his performances during the championship.

The silver medal adds to Bahrain’s strong record at Asian youth level, which already includes the 2016 and 2018 titles and bronze in 2010.

Their run in Amman also earned the kingdom a seventh appearance at the IHF Men’s Youth Handball World Championship, including a fifth in succession, with the next edition scheduled for 2027.

Perfect Bahrain complete Dubai sweep



Guard Ahmed Alderazi looks to get past his Kuwaiti marker

Hussain Almaskati

Bahrain completed a perfect first round of pre-qualifying for the FIBA Asia Cup 2029 last night after cruising to a 95-67 victory over Kuwait in Dubai, the UAE.

The kingdom’s senior men’s basketball team won all four quarters at Sheikh Saeed bin Maktoum Sports Hall to register their fourth successive victory and close out their Group A campaign with an unblemished record.

Having already secured their place in the second round following Sunday’s 105-71 rout of Nepal, Slobodan Subotic’s men finished their opening assignment in style, adding another convincing result to earlier wins over Oman and hosts UAE.

Ahmed Haji led the scoring with 21 points, while Mustafa Rashed and JaKarr Sampson contributed 20 apiece. Mohamed Buallay added 12, all from beyond the arc in the fourth quarter, while Mohamed Juma finished with 11.

Kuwait made the brighter start and moved 7-5 ahead midway through the opening period, but that proved to be their last lead of the contest.

Rashed sparked the turnaround with a three-pointer to make it 8-7 before connecting again from long range just 34 seconds later.

He then set up Haji for another triple as the nationals reeled off nine unanswered points to move 14-7 clear.

Rashed struck his third three-pointer shortly afterwards and finished the opening quarter with 10 points as Bahrain took a 19-11 advantage.

Kuwait produced their strongest response early in the second period, scoring six straight points to reduce the gap to 22-17.

Haji answered with five consecutive points before Rashed followed with another three-pointer and a driving basket, completing a 10-0 burst that stretched the lead to 32-17.

That run put Subotic’s side firmly in control and Kuwait never managed to reduce the deficit to single figures again.

Juma began to make his presence felt inside, while



I’ve been with the team for only a month and, after 24 training sessions, I believe the players showed exactly what I’ve asked of them from day one

COACH SUBOTIC

Sampson struck with successive drives to the basket as the advantage continued to grow, with the Bahrainis eventually carrying a 45-30 lead into the interval.

Kuwait attempted to respond once more after the restart, scoring five unanswered points to cut the gap to 12 at 47-35.

Haji connected from three-point range before Sampson followed with a triple of his own and two free throws, quickly pushing the margin back out to 18 at 55-37.

The nationals eventually entered the final period 69-48 ahead before Buallay took centre stage in the fourth.

The big man knocked down four three-pointers during the period, including the final basket of the contest with 45 seconds remaining, as the lead continued to grow.

Bahrain took the fourth quarter 26-19 to complete a clean sweep of all four periods and seal an emphatic 28-point triumph.

The result completed an impressive opening phase for the Bahrainis, who beat Oman 106-62, UAE 83-80, Nepal 105-71 and Kuwait to finish with four victories from four.

They will now compete in Group E of the second round alongside the UAE, Kuwait, Palestine, Kazakhstan and Sri Lanka, with the next stage scheduled for November and December.

Group F features Hong Kong, China, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Mongolia and Fiji.

The top four teams from each six-nation group will advance to the FIBA Asia Cup 2029 qualifiers, where they will join the 16 sides that competed at the 2025 continental finals in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Bahrain Victorious sign Belgian Slock

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Bahrain Victorious have strengthened their roster for next season with the signing of Belgian rider Liam Slock on a two-year contract.

The 25-year-old will join the UCI WorldTeam from Lotto at the start of the 2027 campaign, adding further power to their line-up for the Spring Classics and stage races.

Slock turned professional in 2023 and has developed into a versatile rider capable of contributing in one-day events, breakaways and time trials.

He claimed the first professional victory of his career earlier this year at the GP Gippingen in Switzerland, attacking as part of a three-man move before winning the sprint ahead of established WorldTour riders Richard Carapaz and Aleksandr Vlasov.

The Belgian also made his Tour de France debut this season and caught the eye with an ambitious solo breakaway on



Liam Slock

stage eight.

Slock spent a lengthy spell out in front before being reeled in by the chasing sprinters with just 1.3 kilometres remaining, narrowly missing the opportunity to contest a maiden Grand Tour stage victory.

Alongside his attacking qualities, he has developed into a strong time trial rider, particularly across flat and rolling terrain.

Bahrain Victorious perfor-

mance manager Rod Ellingworth believes the new arrival will strengthen the team’s options across different types of races.

“We are very happy to add a powerful rider like Liam to our roster,” Ellingworth said. “He is a valuable addition who brings strength to all areas of our race programme, from one-day races to stage races.

“His arrival is part of Bahrain Victorious’ continued effort

to strengthen our core engine for stage races and the Spring Classics.

“We believe Liam has the qualities and mentality to play an important role in our team and we are looking forward to seeing him develop further with us.”

Slock, meanwhile, is relishing the opportunity to take the next step in his career after six years within the Lotto set-up.

“This is a new step in my career, and I am immensely looking forward to developing further in this new environment at Bahrain Victorious,” he said.

“I am motivated to bring my experience and qualities and to strengthen the Classics group of the team.”

Slock also thanked Lotto for the opportunities he received during his time with the Belgian outfit, saying he had grown both as a rider and as a person.

He will officially link up with Bahrain Victorious ahead of the 2027 season, with his contract running for two years.