

Djokovic ties Federer's record for most weeks as world No.1

Reuters | London

Novak Djokovic equalled Roger Federer's all-time record for most weeks as ATP world number one on Monday, holding the top spot for the 310th week.

Djokovic's ninth Australian Open title last month guaranteed that he would surpass Federer's record on March 8.

Having reached another milestone in his illustrious career, Djokovic had said he would look to adjust his calendar and make overhauling Federer and Rafa Nadal's joint-record of 20 Grand Slam titles his top priority.

"Now, after achieving the historic number one for the longest weeks at number one, it's going to be a relief for me because I'm going to focus all my attention on Slams mostly," the Serb had said after his title triumph at Melbourne Park.

"When you are going for number one ranking, you kind of have to be playing the entire season and you have to be playing well, you have to play all the tournaments.

Al Ahli crowned volleyball champions

Victors upset 2020 titlists Muharraq in four sets to claim two-game sweep of finals series in Isa bin Rashid League

● **Bahrain Volleyball Association president Shaikh Ali bin Mohammed Al Khalifa presents Ahli, Muharraq their respective trophies, medals in post-game ceremony**

● **Ahli claim third title in history of the league, adding to their championships in the 2014/2015 and 2017/2018 seasons**

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Al Ahli were last night crowned champions of the 2020/2021 Isa bin Rashid Bahrain First Division Volleyball League.

Ahli claimed the title after a thrilling 3-1 (25-22, 24-26, 25-21, 26-24) victory over Muharraq, which earned them a two-game sweep of their best-of-three finals series.



Ahli team members and club officials celebrate at the awarding

Following the match, which was played at the Bahrain Volleyball Association (BVA) arena at Isa Sports City in Riffa, both teams were presented their respective trophies and medals in a ceremony by BVA president Shaikh Ali bin Mohammed Al Khalifa. Other BVA and club officials were also on hand.

With the result, Ahli claimed only their third title in the history of the league. They last won

in the 2017/2018 season, while their first championship came in 2014/2015.

Ahli were able to avenge their loss against Muharraq in last season's championship round, which they lost in two games. The victors were also able to upset their highly favoured rivals, who were the top seeds at the end of the preliminary round.

In last night's clash, all four



sets were tightly contested as Ahli were looking to secure the title, but Muharraq were battling for their lives, with the hopes of sending the finals series to a winner-take-all third game.

Ahli were the aggressors from the beginning as they took the first set in convincing fashion. They appeared to be on their way to a two-set advantage late in the second but Muharraq were able to rally and tie the proceedings at 1-1 on a smash from Cameroon professional

Yvan Arthur Kody Bitjaa.

It was a minor blip for Ahli in the contest as they were able to regroup in the third set and regain the match advantage. Then, in the fourth, they moved to the brink of securing the title at 24-22, but Muharraq were able to score the next two points, which included a Mohammed Anan error that tied it at 24-all.

But that set the stage for Ahli's title-clinchers, both of which were sent home by skipper Ali Al Sairifi at the net.

Ahli also had key contributions in their win from Brazilian import Luis Fernando Venceslau, and their other top Bahraini talents including Nasser Anan, Abbas Al Khabaaz, Ali Marhoon, Ali Sairifi, Ali Habib and libero Ayman Haroona.

Muharraq were led by local stars Fadhel Abbas, Mahmood Al Afia, Hussain Haikki, Ali Khairallah, Bader Mohammed and Mohammed Habib, as well as Bitjaa.

The 2020/2021 first division volleyball league was held in honour of former Bahrain Olympic Committee president Shaikh Isa bin Rashid Al Khalifa.

Bahrain to host Group A matches in AFC Cup 2021

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Bahrain has been confirmed as host of Group A in the AFC Cup 2021 group stage.

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) announced yesterday the centralised venues of the various groups in the competition. They were determined "following an extensive bidding process and after close consultation with its Participating Member Associations," the AFC said.

Group A from the West Zone includes reigning Bahrain league champions Hidd, Al Nasr of Oman, Al Wahda of Syria and defending champions Al Ahed FC of Lebanon.

Bahrain have another team in the tournament, with Muharraq competing in Group B. Muharraq, who are the 2008 AFC Cup winners, are alongside Al Ansar FC of Lebanon, Al Salt of Jordan and Balata Centre of Palestine.

Their matches will be staged in the Jordanian capital of Amman, along with those in



The AFC Cup

Group C, which comprises Al Faisaly of Jordan, Al Seeb of Oman, Tishreen of Syria and the winner of a West Zone Play-off.

The AFC Cup 2021 group stage will see 39 clubs competing, an increase of three from 2019, over 10 groups. This edition will also award the winning team a place in the preliminary stage of the 2022 AFC Champions League.

Action is scheduled to kick off with the preliminary round on April 6, with the group stage matches to be played in the centralised venues beginning May 14.

AFC Cup 2021

Group A: Al Ahed FC (LBN), Hidd (BRN), Al Wahda (SYR), Al Nasr (OMA)

Group B: Al Salt (JOR), Balata Center (PLE), Al Ansar (LBN), Muharraq (BRN)

Group C: Tishreen (SYR), Al Seeb (OMA), Al Faisaly (JOR), PLE-KUW P/O Winner

Group D: ATK Mohun Bagan (IND), Bashundhara Kings (BAN), Maziya Sports & Recreation (MDV), IND-BAN-NEP-SRI-MDV-BHU P/O Winner

Group E: FC Ravshan (TJK), FC Dordoi (KGZ), Ahal FC (TKM)

Group F: AGMK/Nasaf (UZB), Altyin Aysr (TKM), FC Khujand (TJK), FC Alay (KGZ)

Group G: Hanoi FC (VIE), Bali United (IDN), Boeung Ket (CAM), MYA-LAO-BRU P/O Winner

Group H: Kedah Darul Aman (MAS), Lion City Sailors (SIN), Saigon FC (VIE), IDN-CAM-TLS P/O Winner

Group I: Kaya FC-Iloilo (PHI), Shan United/Ayeyawady United (MYA), Terengganu FC (MAS), Geylang International (SIN)

Group J: Eastern Long Lions (HKG), Tainan City (TPE), Athletic 220 (MNG), Lee Man (HKG)

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