

Muharraq Hammer Isa Town, Riffa Survive Shootout

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

Round two of the King's Cup round-of-16 served up both dominance and drama yesterday, with the last eight starting to come into view. At Khalifa Sports City, Muharraq confirmed their status as one of the favourites with a 6-0 demolition over second-division Isa Town. The scoring opened almost immediately, with Bahrain international Abdulla Al Khalasi unleashing a spectacular long-range strike in the fifth minute that left goalkeeper Hasan Taha with no chance.

From there, the "Red Wolves" dominated possession and territory. Abdulwahab Al Malood doubled the lead in the 28th minute after clever wing play from Elliot Simoes, who beat his marker before squaring the ball for an unmarked finish. Just before halftime, Hasan Al Karrani made it 3-0, rising to meet a corner-kick and guiding his header into the far corner, following a near-miss from Mohammed Al Hardan who struck the crossbar.

The scoring continued after the break. A penalty in the 74th minute, awarded when Mohammed Sulaiman brought down Al



Ali Madan celebrates Riffa's 2nd goal

Khalasi in the box, was calmly converted by Samy Frioui. Substitute Sofufiane Mahrouk then struck twice late on, the first following more clever wing play from Al Khalasi, and the second in the 88th minute when he reacted quickest to a rebound after Simoes' spectacular free-kick rattled the crossbar. Mahrouk's double completed a resounding win for Nandinho's side.

Meanwhile, at Shaikh Ali bin Mohammed Stadium, Riffa were pushed all the way by second-tier Manama in a match that went down to penalties after a 2-2 draw. Riffa took an early lead in the 10th minute as Sayed Mahmood Al Moosawi rose highest to head in Rodrigo Yuri's pinpoint corner. Manama responded in the 29th minute when Nemanja Nikolic latched

onto a ball played from deep, chipped the onrushing goalkeeper, and finished into an empty net.

Mohammed Mashaan's side regained the lead five minutes into the second half through substitute Ali Madan, who finished low into the corner after being slipped in by Sayed Hashim Isa. The game swung again in the 68th minute when Manama's goalkeeper Mohammed Hasan was sent off for a foul on Yacouba Diarra. Despite being reduced to ten men, Manama forced extra time deep into stoppage time, when Ali Meftah raced through to slot home after Mohammed Ahmed's long ball caught the Riffa defence out. Riffa almost won it at the death when Madan blazed over from close range, but the forward made amends in the shootout, converting the decisive penalty to seal qualification.

With these results, Muharraq and Riffa join Bahrain Club and Al Shabab in the King's Cup last eight. Two more quarter-finalists will be decided tonight, with holders Al Khaldiya facing Al Hala at Khalifa Sports City and Al Ittifaq taking on Sitra at Shaikh Ali bin Mohammed Stadium, both matches kicking off at 7pm. The final two spots will be settled in tomorrow's fixtures.

Mercedes ready to win F1 world title, says Russell



Mercedes' George Russell is interviewed in the pit lane before the start of the Abu Dhabi F1 Grand Prix (file photo)

Mercedes favoured under new 2026 regulations

Russell topping bookmaker title odds

AFP | London

George Russell believes he has been handed a car ready to win the world championship as Mercedes head into a new era for Formula One as the title favourites.

Under the leadership of Toto Wolff, Mercedes won eight consecutive constructors' championships and seven drivers' titles between 2014 and 2021.

Since Russell joined in 2022 they have struggled to keep pace with Red Bull and McLaren.

However, a major upheaval of the sport's technical rule-book for the new season means a fresh start for all the teams on the grid.

Mercedes caught the eye in last week's first test at Barcelona's Circuit de Catalunya by boasting both impressive

speed and reliability, with the bookmakers making Russell favourite for his first world title.

"I feel ready to fight for a world championship, and whether we have that tag as favourites above us or not, it doesn't change my approach one single bit," said the British driver at Mercedes' digital launch yesterday.

"There are a lot of things we need to learn very quickly, but I feel I can take advantage of that and I feel confident in myself and in the team."

Four-time world champion Max Verstappen will lead Red Bull's challenge, aiming to regain the title after losing out to Lando Norris last season.

Russell and Verstappen have clashed on and off the track in recent years and the former is relishing the prospect of a title battle to add to the feud between the pair.

"I would love that. He is very much going to be in the fight this year," added Russell.

"You obviously wish you had a slightly easier time of it, but it should never be easy, and if you are going to win, you want to have fought for it and won it fair and square on track."

Liverpool beat Chelsea to Rennes defender Jacquet - reports

AFP | London

Liverpool have beaten off competition from Chelsea to sign Rennes defender Jeremy Jacquet for a fee of up to £60 million (\$82 million), according to British media reports yesterday.

However, the 20-year-old is not set to move to Anfield until the end of the season despite Liverpool's need for defensive reinforcements.

Jacquet had been linked with a transfer to Chelsea



Jeremy Jacquet

earlier this month but was reportedly put off the move by the competition for places at centre-back in the Blues' bloated squad.

Kuwait Club Weather Muharraq Storm

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

Muharraq nearly stole a road victory last night in the FIBA WASL-Gulf League Qualification to Semi-Finals, mounting a furious late comeback against Kuwait Club before ultimately falling 107-101 at the Shaikh Saad Alabdullah Sport Hall Complex.

Trailing by 17 points early in the fourth quarter, 95-78, Peter Schomers' side staged a stunning 17-0 run to tie the score at 95-all. Kris Clyburn was at the heart of the surge, finishing with 27 points, 11 rebounds, and six assists. He also gave the "Red Wolves" a 99-96 lead with 2:40 remaining following a tough layup inside, putting the visitors on the verge of a road upset.

Michael Warren, one of Muharraq's two new signings brought in to cover for injured Kerwin Roach and Timmy Bond, played a key role in the comeback. He tallied 24 points,



Muharraq's Kris Clyburn navigates pressure as Coach Schomers looks on

four rebounds, and six assists, helping to ignite the late-quarter charge. Nick West added 23 points and 11 rebounds, while Mohammed Ameer contributed 12 points during the furious rally.

Despite their fight, Kuwait Club held their nerve in the clos-

ing minutes. Turki Alshemmari scored five straight points late in the fourth quarter, including a crucial corner three-pointer to erase a 98-99 deficit with 1:28 remaining, before converting all his free throws moments later to give the hosts a 103-99 lead. Moh Hasan then struck a de-

cisive three-pointer with 23.7 seconds left to seal the 107-101 win and take a 1-0 lead in the best-of-three series.

Charlie Moore top-scored for Kuwait Club with 24 points, seven rebounds, and ten assists, while Joffrey Lauvergne contributed a double-double of 23 points and 14 rebounds, earning Capelli Sport Player of the Game honors. Hamad Hasan, despite a head injury early in the match, chipped in 18 points, including four three-pointers.

"It shows that we're a good team when we put in the effort and play together," said Muharraq's Clyburn. "We ran, got stops, and competed with a top team. That's a momentum builder going into the next game, knowing that we can compete with this team."

Muharraq will now host Game 2 next Monday, February 9, at the BBA Arena in Bahrain. A win there will force a deciding third game and keep their hopes of a semi-finals return alive.

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