

## Dar Kulaib, Bani Jamra Advance in Crown Prince's Cup



Celebration from Dar Kulaib players after a set win

TDT | Manama

Dar Kulaib and Bani Jamra booked their places in the semi-finals of the 2025-26 His Royal Highness the Crown Prince's Cup after contrasting victories at the Isa Bin Rashid Volleyball Arena yesterday.

Dar Kulaib were in ruthless form, sweeping A'ali 3-0 (25-12, 25-16, 25-17) in a comfortable display from start to finish. The defending league champions controlled every set, reinforcing their status as one of the main contenders for the title.

Bani Jamra, meanwhile, survived a dramatic five-set battle against Nabih Saleh, edging a 3-2 win (25-23, 24-26, 21-25, 25-23, 15-9). After trading momentum throughout the match, they held their nerve in the decider to seal a hard-fought victory.

The remaining semi-final spots will be decided today,

with Muharraq facing Al Tadhamun at 7pm and Al Ahli taking on Al Najma at 8:30pm, both at the Isa Bin Rashid Volleyball Arena.

The tournament features all 14 Bahrain Volleyball Association teams, with both reigning Crown Prince's Cup holders Muharraq and league champions Dar Kulaib still in contention.

Muharraq begin their title defence against an in-form Tadhamun side, who recently impressed with a straight-sets win over Busaiteen (25-21, 25-17, 25-18). Al Ahli reached the last eight with a 3-0 win over Al Shabab (25-16, 25-15, 25-20), while Al Najma defeated Al Dair (25-18, 25-19, 25-17), setting up a balanced quarter-final clash.

The semi-final lineup will be completed after tonight's double-header, with the final four set to resume the knockout stage on Wednesday. The final is scheduled for Saturday.

## Al Ittifaq, East Riffa Earn Promotion



Al Ittifaq's players line up before a match

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Al Ittifaq and East Riffa Club have both secured promotion to the Nasser bin Hamad Premier League for the 2026-2027 season following a thrilling conclusion to the Bahrain First Division campaign.

Al Ittifaq finished top of the table on 47 points after a dramatic 3-2 win over Al Hala, sealed by a stoppage-time strike from Abdulghafour Mahri. The match swung repeatedly throughout the night. Mahri opened the scoring in the 15th minute before Mohammed Fikri levelled almost immediately. Ahmed Kouri restored Al Ittifaq's lead early in the second half, but Al Hala refused to fade, with Fikri striking again in the 82nd minute to make it 2-2. Just when it looked like points would be

shared, Mahri delivered again in the 91st minute to complete his brace and confirm promotion as champions.

Their season also featured a strong cup run, including a penalty shootout defeat to Al Ahli in the King's Cup quarter-finals, underlining their competitiveness against top-tier opposition.

Meanwhile, East Riffa secured their return to the Premier League in equally decisive fashion, finishing second on 46 points after a 1-1 draw with Manama. Needing only a point to guarantee promotion, they held firm under pressure to complete their comeback to the top flight following relegation in the 2024-25 season. Their return also restores one of Bahrain football's most anticipated fixtures, the Riffa Derby against Al Riffa SC, back to the Premier League stage.

# Al Khaldiya on verge of third league crown

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The Nasser bin Hamad Premier League enters a decisive phase today with Matchweek 20, as the season edges closer to its conclusion. Only two rounds remain after this, and the picture is still far from settled. The title race is tight at the top, while the fight to avoid relegation and the playoff zone unfolds across the bottom half.

The round kicks off with two matches today, both at 7 PM. At Khalifa Sports City, league leaders Al Khaldiya face Budaiya. In just a few seasons since their 2020 formation, Al Khaldiya are already in position to chase a third league title, sitting top on 48 points and just two ahead of second-placed Muharraq. The margin at the top leaves no room for error, with next week's meeting between the two sides shaping up as a potential title decider.

Al Khaldiya won the reverse fixture 1-0 in January, an edge that may prove important if the teams finish level on points, as head-to-head record is the primary tiebreaker. If still inseparable, goal difference would apply, where Muharraq currently hold a +10 advantage.

Meanwhile, Budaiya sits ninth with 21 points and occupies the relegation playoff zone, where the ninth- and 10th-placed teams must face First Division opposition to preserve their top-flight status.

Elsewhere, Bahrain Club will take on Al Malkiya at Bahrain National Stadium. Bahrain Club have already been relegated after last week's results and sit bottom on 7 points; their fate is sealed. Al Malkiya are fourth



Al Khaldiya players celebrate a goal in a previous round

on 30 points and aiming to consolidate a strong top-half finish.

Tomorrow, attention shifts back to Khalifa Sports City, where Al Najma meet Muharraq at 7 PM. Al Najma are 10th and in the relegation playoff zone, but a win could lift them as high as eighth depending on other results. Muharraq, second on 46 points, continue their pursuit of a record-extending 36th title after a crucial 1-0 win over Budaiya last week.

Also at 7 PM at Bahrain National Stadium, Al Hidd meet

A'ali. Hidd are sixth on 24 points, just one behind fifth-placed A'ali on 25, with both sides looking to improve their standing in the table.

The round concludes on Tuesday with two more fixtures. At Khalifa Sports City, Riffa take on Al Shabab Club at 7 PM. Riffa remain third after a thrilling 3-2 win over Al Ahli and appear set to finish in that position. Al Shabab are 11th on 14 points and could be relegated this round if they lose and Al Najma avoid defeat.

At the same time, Sitra Club face Al Ahli Club at Bahrain National Stadium. Al Ahli are seventh on 23 points, while Sitra are eighth on 21, just above the relegation playoff line.

Alongside the league action, the individual honours battle adds another layer of intrigue. Muharraq's Edimar Ribeiro da Costa leads the Golden Boot standings on 12 goals, just one ahead of Al Khaldiya's Joel Beya, while Al Ahli's Abdulla Al Hashash remains in contention on 10.

## Second-string Bayern held by Heidenheim before PSG clash

AFP | Berlin

A heavily-rotated Bayern Munich were held to a 3-3 draw at home by last-placed Heidenheim yesterday, days out from their return Champions League semi-final against Paris Saint-Germain.

Bayern made seven changes to the side who lost 5-4 in a wild first leg in the French capital on Tuesday and were down 2-0 in the first half to goals from Budu Zivzivadze and Eren Dinkci.

Bayern roared back from a 3-0 deficit to win 4-3 last week at Mainz and this time round Leon Goretzka scored twice to level things up with half an hour remaining.

Zivzivadze scored again to put Heidenheim back in front



Bayern Munich's Leon Goretzka (C) scores his team's second goal

but substitute Michael Olise scored in the 10th minute of stoppage time to snatch a point for the hosts.

Coach Vincent Kompany once

again named a heavily changed line-up, leaving seven starters from Tuesday's match including Harry Kane, Olise, Joshua Kimmich and Luis Diaz on the

bench.

With Heidenheim needing a win to have any chance of beating the drop, the visitors started frantically, pinning Bayern back with a series of corners.

Heidenheim broke through after 22 minutes when Zivzivadze turned the ball off the post and in from a corner.

Dinkci added another nine minutes later, storming into the box and taking a touch on a Marnon Busch pass to round Bayern goalkeeper Jonas Urbig and tap home.

Bayern were below their best but pulled a goal back before half-time from a set-piece. With dead ball specialists Kimmich and Olise cooling their heels on the bench, Goretzka unleashed a dipping shot into the top right corner.