

# Bahrain sports set to resume

TDT | Manama

After a nationwide pause in sporting activity, Bahrain's national federations are preparing to resume competitions in football, handball, volleyball, and basketball over the coming weeks. All matches will take place without spectators, ensuring the safety of players, officials, and staff while allowing the domestic sporting calendar to continue.

The pause followed recent regional hostilities, including drone and missile strikes that impacted key facilities in the kingdom. Despite these disruptions, federations have now coordinated a cautious return to domestic competitions.

In football, attention turns first to the King's Cup, where Al Khaldiya and Muharraq had already secured semi-final

spots before the suspension. The remaining quarter-final ties — Al Ahli vs. Al Ettifaq and Bahrain Club vs. Riffa —



are now scheduled for March 7, with the Nasser bin Hamad Premier League set to restart on March 12.

Handball competitions will follow, with the Khalid bin Hamad League confirmed to resume after the pause. Volleyball matches are scheduled to restart from March 6, and basketball tournaments, including the tenth edition of the Khalifa bin Salman Cup, are also preparing to resume with updated schedules.

Federations will release detailed timetables and protocols in the coming days, covering match procedures and safety measures. By phasing the return carefully and enforcing strict no-spectator rules, Bahrain aims to restart domestic competitions responsibly, balancing continuity with protection for all involved.

# Victorious target podium in Italy



Antonio Tiberi

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Bahrain Victorious have arrived in Italy to begin their annual Italian racing block, which includes Strade Bianche, Tirreno-Adriatico, and culminates with Milano-Sanremo. The 2026 campaign begins with the Trofeo Laigueglia (1.Pro) today, marking the team's return to the race for the first time since 2021.

The 192 km Trofeo Laigueglia, now in its 63rd edition, combines classic tradition with new challenges. Riders will start in Albenga before finishing, as always, in Laigueglia. The route introduces key features this year, including the iconic Cipressa climb and a 12.6 km stretch along the Cycling Riviera - Ciclovie Riviera dei Fiori. The decisive moments are expected on the final circuit, where competitors will face the Colla Micheri climb multiple times before concluding on Corso Badarò, returning to the course after several years.

With leaders Antonio Tiberi and Santiago Buitrago, Bahrain Victorious aims for a top-three finish, ideally placing two rid-

ers in the top ten, and hopes to see their names inscribed on Laigueglia's celebrated "muretto" wall.

Sports Director Gorazd Štangelj said: "We're happy to return to racing on the roads of Liguria. Antonio has started the season strongly in the UAE, and Santiago comes in after racing in Australia and the Colombian National Championships. The rest of the team will focus on protecting them and bringing them safely to the final circuit. The key climb repeats three times, and winning will require either a strong solo move or the speed to out-sprint a reduced group."

All other riders will compete in Trofeo Laigueglia for the first time. Several arrive in strong form after recent races in France, including Roman Ermakov, Rainer Kepplinger, and young Development Team rider Kasper Borremans, while Oliver Stockwell replaced Jakob Omrzel in Sunday's race.

Bahrain Victorious begins the Italian block with confidence, aiming to make an early impact on one of the season's most prestigious European circuits.

# England 'not fearing anything' against India, says Curran

AFP | Mumbai

England will go into their T20 World Cup semi-final against India with no fear, said all-rounder Sam Curran yesterday, adding that their first job would be to silence a raucous home crowd.

England will take on the favourites and hosts in front of 35,000 fiercely partisan fans in Mumbai on Thursday, with a place in the final against South Africa or New Zealand at stake.

The noise will be deafening at times in the cauldron-like confines of the Wankhede Stadium.

But Curran said that because he and many of his England teammates -- such as Will Jacks at Mumbai Indians -- play in the Indian Premier League (IPL), they will not be fazed.

"It's an experience as a young cricketer you dream of -- playing India in the semi-final of a World Cup," left-arm seamer Curran told reporters.

Curran was in the international wilderness a year ago but forced his way back into the England squad with eye-catching performances in T20 franchise leagues, including the IPL.

"India are a quality side but we've played a lot of cricket here. We know how to play on these grounds and we know what to expect," he said.

"The IPL, no question, has helped a lot. Having played in the ground many times, there's not many unknowns."



England's Tom Banton (2R) and Sam Curran (R) take a water break during a match (file photo)

England experienced a hostile crowd at the Wankhede in their first match of the tournament when they beat Nepal in a final-ball thriller.

It was Curran who bowled the nerveless final "death" over, conceding just five runs when Nepal needed 10, to stave off an embarrassing defeat.

He then repeated the feat against Italy and has contributed with the bat from number six, scoring 149 runs so far with a best of 43 not out.

"We're not fearing anything and I'm sure both teams are re-

ally excited by the challenge," Curran said, adding England could judge how well they were playing by the volume of the fans.

"If the crowd are silent, England are probably going to be doing well. That's our positive way of looking at it," said Curran.

It is the third T20 World Cup in a row that England will have played India in the semi-finals and each time the winners went on to lift the trophy.

In 2022, England crushed India by 10 wickets in Adelaide

and went on to beat Pakistan in the Melbourne final.

Two years ago India won in Guyana by a similarly dominant 68 runs before downing South Africa in Barbados.

South Africa face New Zealand in the first semi-final on Wednesday. The final will take place on Sunday in Ahmedabad.

"I guess this is what the last four or five weeks have been building for," said Curran.

"And hopefully we can take one more step towards the final."

# Liverpool-bound defender Jacquet to undergo shoulder surgery

AFP | Rennes

Centre-back Jeremy Jacquet, who will join Liverpool from Rennes at the end of the season, needs surgery on a shoulder injury he suffered last month, the Ligue 1 club an-



Jeremy Jacquet

nounced yesterday.

The 20-year-old was injured during a defeat to Lens on February 7.

"Following medical examinations, surgery has been scheduled in the coming days," Rennes said in a short statement.

Rennes did not specify when he would be able to return.

Liverpool reached an agreement to sign the France Under-21 international during the January transfer window for a reported 70 million euros (\$81.28 million).

# Guardiola says Premier League teams must adapt to set-piece threat

AFP | London

Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola said teams must adapt to deal with set pieces after Liverpool manager Arne Slot spoke about how they were sucking some of the "joy" out of the Premier League.

Arsenal have been labelled "Set Piece FC" as a result of their prowess from dead ball situations and other sides are learning from their playbook.

Speaking yesterday, on the eve of title-chasing City's match against relegation-threatened Nottingham Forest, Guardiola said clubs had no choice but to learn to deal with the growing threat.

"It's part of the dynamics and you can complain (but) you have to adapt and it's part of the game," he said.

The Spaniard, renowned for his fluid, possession-based football, said "in some aspects" he agreed with Slot, but explained that one of the fascinating aspects of football was



Pep Guardiola

the range of different styles.

"Football has not been played in one way since the it has been created," he said. "So the football played in England is different from Spain, it's different in Italy, it's different and that's nice."

"That's why the Champions League is nice, different ways, even in that country every manager plays in a different way."

"So it's nice, that's why it's so attractive. How boring would it be if all the managers and all the leagues played in the same way?"