

Exclusive

Al Wedaei: Our desire to win decided the final

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TDT | Manama

Barbar's Sayed Ammar Al Wedaei described his side's championship-winning campaign as a product of belief, unity, and the ability to turn difficult moments into momentum. He spoke after their 28-26 win over Al Ahli in the 2025-26 Khalid bin Hamad Bahrain Handball League final at the Khalifa Sports City Arena on Tuesday night.

The final was closely contested from start to finish, with neither side able to build a comfortable lead. Both teams traded goals throughout a tense, physical encounter, with momentum shifting repeatedly as defensive pressure and fast transitions defined the match. Barbar, however, stayed composed in the

closing stages and delivered a late push that ultimately separated the teams and secured their seventh league title, their first since the 2018-19 season.

Speaking to The Daily Tribune, Al Wedaei said the difference came down not only to tactics, but to mentality.

"As a group, our desire to win was stronger than that of Al Ahli's," he said. "We believed in ourselves at every stage of the match and throughout the season, and that shared determination made the difference when it mattered most."

Al Wedaei also highlighted that Barbar's season was shaped as much by what happened off the court as on it, pointing in particular to key breaks during the campaign that could have disrupted their rhythm.

Instead, he said, those inter-



Al Wedaei and HH Shaikh Salman bin Mohammed Al Khalifa during medal presentation

ruptions became a turning point. "The breaks we had during the campaign were very important," he explained. "We chose to use them positively to improve ourselves as a group. They did not affect us negatively. Instead, they helped us come back stronger each time."

Barbar's progress through the season reflected that growth. After finishing fourth in the regular season and entering the knockout stages as underdogs, they raised their level in the most decisive moments. They produced a major upset against defending champions Al Najma in the semi-finals before edging past Al Ahli in a tense final that was decided in the closing minutes.

Behind that rise, Al Wedaei emphasized the importance of internal chemistry and growing

trust within the squad.

"At the beginning of the journey with my teammates, we worked on building confidence in each other, both individually and collectively," he said. "Over time, we developed a strong connection, and that trust gave us extra motivation in every match."

He also credited the supporters for playing a meaningful role in the team's momentum throughout the season.

"We also built a strong connection with the fans," he added. "That support gave us extra motivation and helped push us in key moments."

For Barbar, the victory marked the culmination of a season defined by belief under pressure, with the final once again showing how fine margins decide championships.

BRAVE CF 106 full card revealed for historic return to Slovenia

Manama

BRAVE Combat Federation™ (BRAVE CF), the world's fastest-growing and most global mixed martial arts organization, returns to Slovenia with thunderous intent as it stages BRAVE CF 106 in partnership with World Freefight Challenge on Saturday, June 6, at Hala Tivoli in Ljubljana.

A charged atmosphere is expected as the upcoming premium live event assembles a stacked lineup headlined by two World Championship bouts, positioning the event as a decisive chapter in the promotion's ongoing international expansion.

The Slovene capital is set to transform into a battleground where divisional kings are challenged, rivalries intensify, and emerging contenders seize their moment under the spotlight.

The main event brings heavy-



weight gold into focus as reigning BRAVE CF Heavyweight World Champion Pavel "The Experiment" Dailidko steps inside the cage to defend his crown against top-ranked challenger Miha Frlc.

In the co-headliner, unfinished business takes center stage when Erko "The Bounty Hunter" Jun puts the BRAVE CF Light Heavyweight World Title on the line against No. 3-ranked contender Mohamed "L'Ambiance" Said Maalem in a highly anticipated rematch.

Beyond the marquee encounters, eight additional matchups round out the fight card, putting the spotlight on a diverse mix of talent from Slovenia and across Europe — further reinforcing the event's scope and competitive depth.

BRAVE CF 106 will be aired worldwide. Viewers are advised to check local listings for broadcast details and timing

Hojlund makes permanent move to Napoli from Man Utd

AFP | Rome

Denmark forward Rasmus Hojlund has completed a permanent move to Napoli, the Italian club announced yesterday, following his loan spell from Manchester United last season.

The 23-year-old scored 16 goals in 44 matches as Napoli finished second in Serie A, after failing to settle in two seasons in England.

Reports claim Napoli have spent €44 million to sign Hojlund. United paid Atalanta almost €80 million for him in 2023.

"SSC Napoli announce the conditions have been met for the permanent acquisition of... Rasmus Hojlund from Manchester United," Napoli said in a statement.

Napoli are without a coach after Antonio Conte's departure at the end of the season.



Rasmus Hojlund

Italian media are reporting that ex-AC Milan boss Massimiliano Allegri is the frontrunner for the job.

Hojlund scored 26 goals in 95 appearances for United but struggled during the 2024-25 season after a promising debut campaign at Old Trafford.

"Everyone at the club would like to wish Rasmus all the very best for the future," United said in a statement.

Sabalenka crumbles to French Open quarter-final defeat by Shnaider

AFP | Paris

Aryna Sabalenka's bid for a first French Open title was left in tatters as she fell apart in a bizarre defeat by Russian 25th seed Diana Shnaider in the quarter-finals yesterday.

The world number one led by a set and a double-break before exiting the tournament in a blaze of unforced errors, collapsing to a 3-6, 7-5, 6-0 loss in blustery conditions on Court Philippe Chatrier.

Shnaider will face Polish qualifier Maja Chwalinska in the semi-finals on Thursday, with Marta Kostyuk or Mirra Andreeva awaiting the winner in Sunday's final.

"Well honestly I'm speechless, I'm super happy. Obviously tough conditions with the wind," said the 22-year-old Shnaider after beating a top-10 player for only the second time in her career.

"First time playing Aryna so definitely a lot of nerves and I feel the first set was trying to



Aryna Sabalenka leaves the court after losing against Diana Shnaider



Aryna Sabalenka's sudden exit means that for the first time this tournament, there are absolutely no former Grand Slam singles champions left flying in either the men's or the women's draws

adjust to her game."

Sabalenka was the only Grand Slam champion left in either the men's or women's singles draws at Roland Garros, but belied that status by making a whopping 57 unforced errors.

Shnaider was playing in her first major quarter-final, but now finds herself a strong fa-

vorite to reach the final heading into her last-four tie against world number 114 and fellow left-hander Chwalinska.

"Definitely super happy I managed to finish on a good note rather than start on a good note. Definitely a special tournament for me here," added the Russian. "It's going to be a lefty battle so I'm looking forward (to the semi-final)."

Sabalenka's scarcely believable defeat was reminiscent of the way she threw away a strong position in last year's final against Coco Gauff.

The Belarusian was playing in a 14th consecutive Grand Slam quarter-final but failed to become the first woman to make seven straight major semis since Serena Williams.

Increasingly frustrated Sabalenka

The top seed raced into a 5-1 lead and eventually sealed the opener on her third set point after initially failing to serve it out.

The second set followed a sim-

ilar pattern at first, as Sabalenka moved 4-1 in front with a double-break before throwing away her next service game.

Sabalenka became increasingly frustrated as she gifted Shnaider three break points to level at 4-4.

After some animated remonstrating with her box, she recomposed herself enough to hold.

But the 28-year-old's game continued to come apart, as a string of dreadful unforced errors allowed Shnaider to break again and tie up the set at 5-5, with Sabalenka left to gesticulate wildly towards her coaching staff.

Shnaider could not believe her luck as Sabalenka dumped successive forehands into the bottom of the net to finish off the set and send the match into a decider.

The Russian grew in confidence and moved 2-0 up in the third as Sabalenka sprayed eight unforced errors around Chatrier in the space of two games.