

# Manama close in on league crown

Defending champions go on 12-1 run to end regulation, force overtime and secure 2-0 lead in best-of-five championship series

● **Travin Thibodeaux leads Manama with 26 points, 10 rebounds before fouling out**

● **Sir'Dominic Pointer has 17 points, 13 boards, seven assists, four steals and four blocks**

TDI | Manama

Manama pulled off a stunning, come-from-behind 104-100 overtime victory over Muharraq last night to move one win away from securing back-to-back titles in the Zain Bahrain Basketball League.

Facing a double-digit deficit with less than two minutes to go in regulation, Manama went on a 12-1 run, capped by a driving Ali Hussain lay-up with 0.5 seconds remaining, to tie the game at 93-all and send it into the five-minute extra session.

There, they took care of businesses, converting five pressure-packed free-throws in the closing moments to help secure the 2-0 advantage in this thrilling best-of-five championship series.

The finals are now headed for a break to make way for Manama's participation in the FIBA West Asia Super League (WASL) Final Eight in Dubai, taking place from Friday to June 17.

Manama and Muharraq will resume their battles after that event.

It was an exciting clash between the two sides at a packed Khalifa Sports City Arena in Isa Town last night from the opening tip.

Muharraq came out of the gate with all guns firing and quickly took a 12-2 lead following a DeWayne Jackson three-pointer, but Manama gradually got into their groove and the score was deadlocked at 24-all at the end of the first.

In the second, Muharraq began to pull away and a Hussain Salman triple gave them a 52-41



Muharraq's Baqer Isa goes for a lay-up as Manama's Mohammed Ameer tries to block his shot

advantage, but Travin Thibodeaux had a three-point play for Manama with four seconds to bring them to within 44-52 at the half.

In the third, Muharraq started strong and a Shabbaz Muhammad basket made it 58-44. But then Manama went on a scintillating 18-0 rally, sparked mostly by Thibodeaux, to give his team a 62-58 lead, and they eventually headed into the final canto up 68-64.

Salman then came alive for Muharraq in the final canto, helping them take a 92-81 advantage with two free-throws. At this point, Thibodeaux had fouled out but Manama did not give up, and a furious late surge sparked by Hussain brothers Ali and Mustafa, culminating with Ali's driving lay-up, levelled the proceedings at 93-apiece and sent the game into overtime.

There, a Muhammad floating jumper gave Muharraq a 100-99 lead with just over two minutes to go, but they would not score from there and Manama were able to convert their shots from

the charity stripe to seal the hard-earned win.

Thibodeaux led Manama's scorers with 26 points while grabbing 10 rebounds, while Mustafa Hussain added 18 off the bench. Sir'Dominic Pointer had a fine all-around performance with 17 points, 13 rebounds, seven assists, four steals and four blocks, while Ali Hussain chipped in with 16 and Mohammed Ameer had 13.

Muhammad paced Muharraq with 34 points while Hussain Salman had 25 off the bench. Jackson finished with 24 as their only other player in double figures.

The remaining games in the championship series have yet to be scheduled by the Bahrain Basketball Association. In the WASL Final Eight, Manama are in Group A of the competition along with Al Riyadi and Beirut First Club from Lebanon and Chennai Heats from India. Group B features Kuwait SC of Kuwait, Shabab Al Ahli of the UAE, Shahrdary Gorgan from Iran and BC Astana from Kazakhstan.

## India coach Dravid says Broad plan alone not enough against Warner

AFP | New Delhi

India coach Rahul Dravid said yesterday there was more to dismissing Australia's David Warner in this week's World Test Championship (WTC) final than employing the tactics England's Stuart Broad used so successfully during the 2019 Ashes.

Warner has been one of the outstanding opening batsmen of his generation, with the 36-year-old having scored 8,158 runs at an average of 45.57, including 25 hundreds, in 103 Tests.

But he heads into the WTC final and ensuing five-match Ashes series with one century in his past 32 innings and a mediocre record in England.

During the 2-2 drawn Ashes series in England four years ago, he averaged under 10 and seven times fell victim to Broad, mainly bowling from around the wicket to the left-hander.

"He (Warner) is a class player. It's not as simple as just turning up and bowling round the wicket



Australian batsmen David Warner (R) and Marnus Labuschagne runs between the wickets as Stuart Broad (C) looks on (file photo)

**During the 2-2 drawn Ashes series in England four years ago, Warner averaged under 10 and seven times fell victim to Broad, mainly bowling from around the wicket to the left-hander**

et and getting him out," Dravid told reporters at the Oval ahead of the showdown, which begins on Wednesday.

"He wouldn't have played a hundred times if it was that simple."

The former India batsman added: "There's nowhere to hide any more, everyone has very similar information about each other. It's just how you

counter that. "Every batsman will have areas they're strong at and areas that are not probably their strengths, and David has been very successful. "We know it's a very important wicket to get early on." This is just the second WTC final with India having been beaten by New Zealand in the inaugural 2021 showpiece in Southampton. Australia and India qualified by coming first and second in the standings at the end of a two-year Test cycle.

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## 'No fear' of City in Champions League final, says Inter's Inzaghi



Inter Milan's players acknowledge the public at the end of a match

AFP | Milan

Simone Inzaghi said Monday that Inter Milan are not scared of Manchester City as he prepares his team for the Champions League final against the mega-rich, treble-hunting outfit.

Inter will contest in Istanbul their first Champions League final since last winning the competition 13 years ago, but City are heavy favourites to be crowned kings of Europe for

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SIMONE INZAGHI

the first time.

Pep Guardiola's City are in their second Champions League final in three years and come into Saturday's clash after destroying Real Madrid in the last four, and winning both the Premier League and FA Cup.

"We're talking about a football match, there's no fear," said Inzaghi.

"We have a lot of respect but we're proud to play this final because we wanted it with every fibre of our being."

Inter will have to stop a potent City attack led by striker Erling Haaland who has netted 12 times in Europe this season and will top the competition's scoring charts whatever happens in Turkey.

## Hassan, Andrei triumph as BTC juniors tennis begins

TDI | Manama

Hassan Mirza and Andrei Cifra were both victorious yesterday in their respective under-18 open matches in the Bahrain Tennis Club (BTC) Juniors Tournament 2023, which got underway at the BTC courts in Juffair.

Hassan defeated Neveta Vinod 6-0, while Andrei beat Aarav Fernandez with a similar 6-0 score line.

In the under-14 open category, Marwan Safi beat Rion Jay 6-1, Atif Saquib defeated Ziyad Hasan 6-1, Clark Sayago beat Aryan Sathyan Das 6-1, and Marvel



Some of the players with BTC coaches at the tournament's opening yesterday

Chris won over William Zhou via walkover.

In the under-12 open class, Maria Al Soofi beat Zayaan Irfan Siddiqi 6-2, Avantika Rout defeated Bitu Aryan 6-3, and both Aarna Poonam and Tarush Kali-

hari were winners via walkover.

Charu Chavan was a 4-1 victor in the under-10 open category, beating Laksh Parmar. In the same age group, Zayan Hasan defeated Fairouz Elsum 4-0, Brando Estripeau beat Nour

Lamine 4-0, Hussain Ali Mohammed Abbas defeated Zainab Siddiqi 4-0, and Zara Hassan won against Aditya Chavan 4-0.

Tournament action continues today at the BTC courts from 5pm onwards.

**BETTER YOU KNOW**  
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