

Red Wolves Roar Back into Title Contention



Juninho strikes emphatically to double Muharraq's lead

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

Defending champions Muharraq produced a clinical display at Khalifa Sports City yesterday, thrashing Sitra 4-0 to climb to 2nd place in the Nasser Bin Hamad Premier League, just one point behind leaders Al Khaldiya. The Red Wolves were coming off a 1-0 defeat to Al Khaldiya, but Nandinho's side controlled the game from start to finish. Sitra, coached by Isa Al Saadoun, were thoroughly outplayed and remain in eighth.

The scoring blitz started almost immediately, with Waleed Al Hayyam opening the account in the first minute. What looked like a routine corner clearance fell perfectly to Gervásio Olivera, whose side-footed delivery sent the

ball high into the box, where Al Hayyam met it with a composed volley into the corner. Keeper Youssef Habib could do little as the ball floated delicately from range, and the defender finished like a seasoned striker.

Nandinho's men then doubled their advantage in the 16th minute through Brazilian Juninho. A throw-in found Argentinian Facundo Tobares at the edge of the box, and although Sitra defenders thought they had cleared it, the ball fell kindly to Juninho in space. The striker made no mistake, unleashing an emphatic volley that underlined his reputation as Muharraq's reliable finisher.

Al Saadoun's were put further on the back foot just before halftime when Tobares turned provider into scorer.

Dias sidelined with Gvardiol as Man City face defensive crisis

AFP | London

Manchester City will be without Ruben Dias for up to six weeks and fellow defender Josko Gvardiol for "a long time", manager Pep Guardiola said yesterday.

The club announced on Monday that centre-back Gvardiol was facing a lengthy lay-off with a tibial fracture to his right leg that he suffered in Sunday's 1-1 draw with Chelsea.

Speaking to reporters yesterday, on the eve of City's home game against Brighton, Guardiola confirmed the depth of the crisis in central defence, with John Stones also sidelined.

Guardiola said Dias had injured his hamstring and would be out of action for "between four and six weeks" while he did not put a timescale on Gvardiol's return.



Josko Gvardiol

Referring to Stones, Guardiola said: "(He is not) ready for the next games. Of course, he's an important player for us for a long time and he was injured for a long time last season. This season looks the same.

"He's trying a lot and trying everything, but he's not fit."

Guardiola, whose team are second in the Premier League, six points behind leaders Arsenal, said he was confident they could cope with the absences.

Kyrgios urges Djokovic to stay in tennis after Adelaide pullout

Injury concerns force Djokovic caution as Kyrgios hails lasting legacy

● Djokovic targets Australian Open return

● Kyrgios praises veteran's longevity

AFP | Adelaide

Nick Kyrgios urged Novak Djokovic to stay in tennis "as long as possible" after the Serbian great yesterday pulled out of his only lead-up tournament to the Australian Open, saying he was "not quite physically ready".

The 38-year-old was planning to use the Adelaide International from January 12 as a springboard to the opening Grand Slam at Melbourne Park a week later where he is targeting an 11th title and elusive 25th major crown.

"To all my fans in Adelaide, unfortunately I'm not quite physically ready to compete in the Adelaide International next week," Djokovic said on Instagram.

"It's personally very disappointing to me, as I have such great memories of winning the title there two years ago. I was really excited about returning as it truly felt like playing at home.

"My focus is now on my preparation for the Australian Open and I look forward to arriving in Melbourne soon and seeing all the tennis fans in Australia."



Novak Djokovic celebrates after winning the final of the ATP Adelaide International tournament in 2023

The world number four has not played a tour match since he defeated Lorenzo Musetti in the Athens final in early November and has become very selective about when and where he plays.

Australian showman Kyrgios, who lost his comeback match at the Brisbane International this week after a long injury layoff, urged everyone involved in tennis to appreciate Djokovic while he was still playing.

"There's obviously something there that he wants to achieve, whether it's another Grand



Djokovic has signalled he hopes to play until the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, aiming to defend the gold medal he won in Paris

Slam or something else," he told the Sydney Morning Herald.

"But I think we should just cherish the fact that someone that old in our sport is still at the top of it and still gives everything to it.

"The longer we have guys like this around, the better it is for our sport.

"I feel like there's been a void in the sport ever since (Roger) Federer and (Rafael) Nadal left ... and obviously when Novak goes, that era is completely gone. I want him to stay for as long as possible."

Muharraq Begin Arab Championship Journey in Tunisia



Team Muharraq ahead of departure for the championship

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

The Kingdom's volleyball champions Muharraq are set to take center stage in Tunisia as the 44th Arab Club Men's Volleyball Championship begins today, marking the start of a demanding regional contest featuring the Arab world's elite clubs. The tournament runs from January 6 to 18, with matches at El Menzah Sports Palace and the Sidi Bou Said Indoor Arena, bringing together 12 top teams.

Muharraq are the Kingdom's sole representatives and are in Group B alongside Etoile

Sportive du Sahel of Tunisia, Qatar's Al Shorta SC, Al Ittihad of Libya, Majees of Oman, and the Palestinian Military Club. While the tournament starts today, Muharraq will begin their campaign tomorrow, ready to challenge the region's strongest sides.

The Bahrain champions have a demanding group-stage schedule, with five matches in as many days. They open against Majees on Thursday at 2 PM Bahrain time, followed by a clash with Al Ittihad on Friday at the same hour. On Saturday, they meet the hosts Etoile Sportive du Sahel at 3 PM, before facing Police SC on Sunday at 3

PM, and concluding the preliminary round on Monday against the Palestinian Military Club at 5 PM.

Preparation has been carried out locally under head coach Yaseen Al Meel, as the squad balances continental ambitions with the 2025-26 Isa Bin Rashid Bahrain Volleyball League, where they aim to defend their national crown. Muharraq's roster brings experienced national-team regulars with internationally recognized talent. This includes Naser Anan, Mahmood Alafyah, Sayed Hashem Issa, Mohammed Abdulla, Mohammed Omar, Abbas Al Khabbaz, Majeed Mohammed, Hussain

Ehsan, Abbas Ehsan, Ali Al-sairafi, and Swedish professional Jacob Link, whose presence adds further strength and depth to the squad.

Meanwhile, the other side of the draw features Al Seeb (Oman), Northern Refineries (Iraq), Tadjenanet (Algeria), Asswehly (Libya), Qatar SC, and Espérance Sportive de Tunis, setting the stage for highly competitive matchups. With last year's finalists, Zamalek and Al Ahly, absent, Muharraq have a prime opportunity to assert themselves and target a deep run as they begin their campaign tomorrow in Tunis.

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