

Al Najma through to semis

Bahrain champions punch tickets to final four in 25th Asian Men's Club League Championship in Isfahan

● **Qassim Qambar receives Match Most Valuable Player award against RKOR Tashkent**

● **Al Najma to next face off with Group A winners Al Rayyan of Qatar in semis tomorrow**

TDT | Manama

Bahrain's Al Najma barged yesterday into the semi-finals of the 25th Asian Men's Club League Championship, currently taking place in Isfahan, Iran.

Najma secured their spot after routing RKOR Tashkent of Uzbekistan 44-28 in their concluding Group B game of the preliminary round.

The result earned them second place on their division standings and secured their tickets to the last four, where they will face off against Al Rayyan of Qatar, who finished as winners of Group A. Group B toppers Al Duhail, also of Qatar, lock horns with Kazma SC of Kuwait in the



Al Najma's Qassim Qambar, standing fourth from left, celebrates with teammates as he receives his Match MVP award

other semi-final clash.

Following a rest day today, both semis contests are scheduled to take place tomorrow. The winners then move on to the gold medal match on Saturday, while the losers battle for the bronze medals that same day.

The Bahrainis led 19-15 at the half in their game against Tashkent yesterday and then stepped it up over the final 30 minutes to extend their winning margin to 16 goals. That proved crucial

in their bid for the last four as it gave them the goal difference they needed to advance from the preliminaries.

Najma, Duhail and last year's Asian clubs champions Kuwait SC all finished with four wins and one loss from their five Group B games, with Duhail and Najma boasting the best goal differences.

Qassim Qambar was named the Match Most Valuable Player yesterday, and he was awarded a



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prize post-game for his efforts.

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In other results yesterday, Duhail defeated Shahid Shamehli Kazeroon of Iran 29-23 and Kuwait SC beat Junior Club of China 41-37, both in Group B.

In Group A, Rayyan outclassed Oman Club of Oman 35-21, and Foolad Mobarakeh Sepahan SC of Iran beat T-Sports Club of India 10-0.



Al Najma's Mohammed Ahmed and Vuk Lazovic look to defend their Tashkent opponent

GROUP B STANDINGS

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
Al Duhail (QAT)	5	4	0	1	34	8
Al Najma (BRN)	5	4	0	1	30	8
Kuwait SC (KUW)	5	4	0	1	20	8
Shahid Shamehli Kazeroon (IRI)	5	2	0	3	-7	4
Junior Club (CHN)	5	0	1	4	-36	1
RKOR Tashkent (UZB)	5	0	1	4	-41	1

The championship has been organised and run by the Asian Handball Federation (AHF). The winners qualify for the 17th IHF Men's Super Globe, to be held from October 17 to 23 in Saudi Arabia.

Najma are hoping to replicate or improve on their finish in last year's Asian clubs competition held in Hyderabad, India, where they won the silver medals.

Bahrain juniors enter final preparations for handball worlds

● **Bahrain Handball Association chief visits training session ahead of squad's departure for Athens**

● **2023 IHF Men's Junior World Championship to be played June 20 to July 2 in Germany and Greece**

TDT | Manama

Bahrain's junior national handball team have entered the final stages of their preparations locally before heading to Europe for their participation in the 2023 IHF Men's Junior World Championship.

The worlds are scheduled to be held in Germany and Greece from June 20 to July 2.

The Bahrainis are set to travel to Athens for their final lead-up to the competition. There, they will hold a training camp and play a number of



Bahrain's players and officials gather around Ali Issa during their training session

warm-up games against their counterparts from Greece and Morocco, along with other teams.

Bahrain Handball Association (BHA) president Ali Issa visited the squad during a local training session under head coach Essam Abdulla and his assistant Raed Al Marzouq.

The BHA chief encouraged the players to put in their best effort in the tournament and represent Bahrain handball to the best of their abilities.

Abdulla has been training with a roster of 22 players, including Abdulla Abdulkarim and Komail Fouad from Naj-

ma; Sadiq Jaafar and Hussain Ali from Tubli; Ahmed Redha, Ahmed Alwani and Jassim Khamis from Shabab; Mustafa Al Hayki, Hassan Khalil, Ahmed Al Zain and Hussain Al Hawaj from Ahli; Ali Al Asheeri, Hesham Isa and Mahmood Abdullhussain from Al Dair; Mohammed Hameed, Ali Jameel and Ali Mahmood from Al Ettifaq; Yasser Mohammed and Ali Madan from Barbar; Ali Redha and Ali Al Fardan from Tadhmun; and Mohammed Al Khunaizi from Al Ettihad.

The junior nationals are in Group F for the worlds, alongside Sweden, Slovenia and

Greenland. There are 32 teams in all competing, divided into eight pools of four for the preliminary round.

Group A features France, Poland, Croatia and the US. Group B comprises Algeria, Germany, Tunisia and Libya. Group C consists of Portugal, Brazil, Kuwait and Costa Rica; while Group D includes Spain, Faroe Islands, Japan and Angola. Group E features Hungary, Denmark, Argentina and Norway; while Group G comprises Serbia, Morocco, Chile and Iceland. The field is completed by Egypt, Greece, Cuba and Saudi Arabia in Group H.

Djokovic into French Open semi-finals for 12th time



Novak Djokovic plays a forehand return to Karen Khachanov

AFP | Paris

Novak Djokovic closed in on a potential blockbuster French Open semi-final against Carlos Alcaraz after beating Karen Khachanov 4-6, 7-6 (7/0), 6-2, 6-4 yesterday to reach the last four.

Djokovic, chasing a third French Open crown and record 23rd men's Grand Slam singles title, advanced to a 45th major semi-final and his 12th at Roland Garros.

He will take on world number one Alcaraz or Stefanos Tsitsipas, the player he beat from two sets down in the 2021 final, for a place in Sunday's championship match.

Djokovic dropped his first set of the tournament but dominated the second-set tie-break against Khachanov before putting his foot down to secure a ninth win in 10 meetings with the Russian 11th seed.

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"I think he was a better player for most of the first two sets. I was struggling to find my rhythm. I came into the match quite slow but played a perfect tie-break and from that moment onwards played a couple levels higher

NOVAK DJOKOVIC

player for most of the first two sets," said Djokovic.

"I was struggling to find my rhythm. I came into the match quite slow but played a perfect tie-break and from that moment onwards played a couple levels higher.

"It's a big fight, something you expect in the quarter-finals. You're not going to have your victories handed to you, you have to earn them."

Laporte stretches Dauphine lead with stage win

AFP | Paris

Frenchman Christophe Laporte extended his overall lead in the Criterium du Dauphine by winning the third stage yesterday.

Jumbo-Visma's Laporte pipped Irishman Sam Bennett in second place and Dutch rider Dylan Groenewegen in third

after a 194.1km ride finishing in Le Coteau, to the east of Lyon.

With less than a month to go to the Tour de France, reigning Tour champion Jonas Vingegaard finished in the main group as did 2019 winner Egan Bernal.

Laporte now leads compa-

triot Julian Alaphilippe by 11 seconds in the overall standings thanks to a bonus for the stage victory with Ecuadorian Richard Carapaz third, 17 seconds behind.

Wednesday's fourth stage is a 31.1km individual time trial from Cours to Belmont-de-la-Loire.



Christophe Laporte (C) celebrates as he crosses the finish line