

Bahrain bow out after Afghan defeat

Junior men miss Asian Cup qualification following 3-1 loss



Osama scores Bahrain's short-lived equaliser

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

Bahrain's hopes of reaching the AFC U20 Asian Cup 2027 came to an end last night after a disappointing 3-1 defeat to Afghanistan in their final Group D qualifier at Khalifa Sports City Stadium in Isa Town.

Ali Aamer's side needed victory to keep their qualification hopes alive but were punished by an Afghan team that had entered the contest without a point from their opening two matches.

The result left the kingdom's youngsters on three points from three games, having beaten Tajikistan 3-2 before losing 2-1 to Jordan.

The visitors stunned the hosts after just six minutes when a long clearance dropped into Bahrain's defensive third. Captain Habibullah Hotak outmuscled Bader Al Asam as he attempted to deal

with the ball, evaded a challenge from Adam Farid and fired into the roof of the net.

The Bahrainis enjoyed plenty of possession afterwards but struggled to create clear-cut opportunities. Ali Mahran, who scored a hat-trick against Tajikistan, volleyed over from close range in the 27th minute.

Ali Nasser then whipped a dangerous free-kick across the face of goal shortly before half-time, but it evaded everyone when only a touch was needed to turn it in.

The nationals finally drew level in the 59th minute. Abdulla Osama met a corner with a low header that took a deflection on its way into the bottom corner.

Their momentum was short-lived, however, as substitute Yaser Safi restored Afghanistan's lead 10 minutes later. The winger created space just inside the penalty area before curling a fine effort into the corner, past goalkeeper Abdulla Abdo.

Mahran found the side-netting in the 75th minute before the Afghans put the contest beyond reach six minutes from time. A long kick from their goalkeeper was flicked into the path of Farzad Tajik. He raced through, rounded the keeper and rolled into an empty net for 3-1.

Tempers flared during the celebrations, with the two benches clashing after Bahrain took exception to the reaction to the goal. Unused substitute Karar Hussain was shown a red card.

The defeat ended the hosts' bid to return to the AFC U20 Asian Cup for the first time since 2016.

Earlier yesterday, Tajikistan defeated Jordan 1-0 to leave both teams on six points, with the Central Asians finishing top of Group D on goal difference.

The eight group winners and seven best runners-up advance to next year's finals in China.

Sensational Antonelli wins Italian GP from back of grid

AFP | Monza

Championship leader Kimi Antonelli delivered one of the most sensational triumphs in the long history of the Italian Grand Prix on Sunday when he became the first home winner in 60 years after starting from 19th on the grid.

The 20-year-old Mercedes driver, from nearby Emilia Romagna, claimed his seventh win of the season to extend his lead in the drivers' title race as he seeks to become Italy's first world champion since Ferrari's Alberto Ascari in 1953.

He is the first domestic winner of the Italian GP since Ludovico Scarfiotti



in 1966.

In a thrilling, helter-skelter race of wild yo-yo overtaking moves, Antonelli came home 3.857 seconds ahead of his teammate and title rival George Russell, who is now 66 points adrift in the championship, with four-time

champion Max Verstappen third for Red Bull.

For the impassioned Italian crowd, his win was some consolation for their disappointment in seeing Ferrari endure a disappointing flop with Charles Leclerc crashing out on lap two, and seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton finishing sixth behind the McLaren pair of world champion Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri.

Antonelli had started at the back of the grid after taking penalties for power-unit changes, but showed searing pace throughout as he carved through the field – benefitting from an early red flag stoppage -- before outracing Russell to win.

Kimi Antonelli kisses his trophy

FIFA confirms Infantino will run in presidential election

AFP | Paris

Gianni Infantino will stand in next March's FIFA presidential election, despite the backlash over his now-abandoned plan to bring private investment into the World Cup, football's global governing body announced yesterday.

"The FIFA President announced in April that he will stand for re-election in 2027," a FIFA spokesperson said. "Of course, nothing has changed. Mr Infantino will be standing for re-election."

The 56-year-old Swiss has taken a pummelling since the announcement in late July of his short-lived FIFA Forward Enterprise (FFE) plan to bring private investment into FIFA events.



Gianni Infantino

But now for the first time since the plan became public, FIFA has reiterated Infantino's intention to run for a fourth and final term in next year's elections.

Should he be re-elected, he will continue to serve as head of

world football until 2031.

Infantino is in Poland for the Women's Under-20 World Cup, but refused to answer queries about his future when questioned by journalists on Saturday.

Cagers depart for Japan

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Bahrain's senior men's basketball team departed for Japan last night ahead of their campaign at the 20th Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya.

The kingdom's cagers head into the continental showpiece in good form after sweeping through Group A of the opening round of Fiba Asia Cup 2029 pre-qualifying unbeaten in Dubai last week.

Nine players from that campaign have made the trip, with big men Uros Ilc and Elijah Thomas and guard-forward Kelechi Ajukwa added to strengthen Greek-Slovenian head coach Slobodan Subotic's side.

The trio join Ahmed Alderazi, Ahmed Bindayneh, Ahmed Haji, Ali Rashed, Ali Al Haddad, Mustafa Rashed, JaKarr Sampson, Mohammed Juma'a and Mohammed Buallay in the 12-man squad.

The Bahrainis have been handed a challenging Pool C assignment in the 12-team tournament, which will be played at the 15,000-capacity Aichi International Arena.



Bahrain's basketball team depart for their Asiad challenge in Japan

Subotic's men begin against defending champions the Philippines on Friday at 1pm before taking on China on Saturday at 10am and Kazakhstan on September 14 at 4pm. All times are Bahrain.

Pool A features Japan, South Korea, Saudi Arabia and Indonesia, while Iran, Jordan, Chinese Taipei and Qatar make up Pool B.

Bahrain Basketball Association vice-president Nader Al Awadhi heads the delega-

tion, which also includes team manager Mohammed Al Omairi and administrator Moosa Jaffar. Subotic is assisted by Leon Subotic and Ahmed Aziz, with Isa Al Rumaihi serving as fitness coach and Ebrahim Jawhar as physiotherapist.

The quarter-finals are scheduled for September 16, followed by the semi-finals on September 18 and the gold and bronze medal games on September 20.

The basketball squad join

a sizeable Bahrain contingent already confirmed for the Games. Said Sadrudinov, Askerbii Gerbekov, Ruslan Poltoratskii, Mukhamed Al-oev, Gadzhidavud Gasanov, Israpil Sagaipov and Sukhrob Boqiev will compete in men's judo, while Ahmed Madan and Ahmed Naser have been selected for men's cycling.

Maryam Hassani, Maryam Alasam, Maryam Sulaiti, Marwa Bu Araki, Shaikh Khalifa

Al Khalifa, Tammar Alwatt and Saeed Hassan will represent the kingdom in shooting, with reigning Olympic champion Akhmed Tazhudinov and Alibeg Alibego named for men's wrestling.

Fatema Kalawadh and Ola Aldoseri will compete in women's taekwondo, Khalid Faraj and Abdulla Alshaikh in men's jiu-jitsu, and Adnan Ebrahim in men's badminton.

The esports contingent features Mohamed Hujairi, Fadhel

Taher, Hassan Ebrahim, Husam Al Ansari, Mohammed Darbas and Yousef Bahram.

Olympic champion Winfred Yavi, meanwhile, will spearhead Bahrain's 34-member athletics squad as the kingdom targets further success on the continental stage.

The 20th Asian Games run from September 19 to October 4, with more than 11,000 athletes from 45 nations set to compete across 469 medal events in 43 sports.