

# Bahrain names training roster for Olympics

Senior men's national handball team to begin preparations for Tokyo Games today; squad of 27 of Kingdom's top talents named for initial gathering

● Four of Bahrain's overseas-based professional players named to squad, including skipper Hussain Al Sayyad

● Eight players selected from back-to-back league champions and Khalid bin Hamad Handball Cup winners Al Najma

● National team assistant coach Essam Abdulla to begin supervision of sessions prior to arrival of head coach Aron Kristjansson

TDT | Manama

Bahrain have named a 27-player roster for the senior men's national team that will begin training lo-



Bahrain national team star Jassim Al Salatna in action during international play earlier this year (file photo)

cally today in preparation for this summer's Tokyo Olympic Games.

The squad was announced by the Bahrain Handball Association yesterday, and the first gathering will be supervised by national team assistant coach Essam Abdulla until the arrival of Icelandic tactician Aron Kris-

tjansson, who is expected to join at the end of the month.

The team is set to be spearheaded by Bahrain's overseas-based professional players, including skipper Hussain Al Sayyad and Mohammed Habib from Saudi Arabian club Al Wehda, Ali Mirza from Sharjah in the UAE, and Jassim Al Salatna from

Emirati club Al Maliha.

Back-to-back league champions and Khalid bin Hamad Handball Cup winners Al Najma have eight players on the roster, including Mohammed Abdullhussain, Mahdi Saad, Belal Basham, Hassan Al Fardan, Ali Eid, Mohammed Mirza, Mohammed Habib Nasser and Komail Mahfoodh.

Four players are from Barbar, who were the losing finalists in both the league and cup. They include Qassim Al Shuwaikh, Qassim Qambar, Ahmed Jassim and Ali Abdulqader.

The rest of the team list features Hassan Al Samaheji, Mahmood Hussain, Mohammed Mirza, Hussain Mahfoodh and Hasan Madan from Al Ahli; Ahmed Jalal and Mujtaba Al Zaimoor from Al Shabab; Mohammed Hameed and Ali Mahmood from Al Ettifaq; Hassan Mirza from Tadhamon and Hisham Ahmed Isa from Al Dair.

All players called up are expected to be a part of today's sessions, with exception to the eight from Najma and four from



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Barbar. The two teams had just battled it out in the final of the Khalid bin Hamad Handball Cup on Thursday night, and will be granted some time to rest before joining training on Tuesday next week.

Bahrain's national handball team are making an historic debut appearance in Tokyo, as the first-ever athletes from the

Kingdom to have qualified for a team sport at the Olympics.

For the men's tournament's preliminary stage, Bahrain will be playing against Egypt, Portugal, hosts Japan, world championship silver-medallists Sweden, and reigning world and Olympic champions Denmark.

Group A consists of Argentina, Spain, Germany, France, Norway and Brazil.

The men's handball tournament at the Tokyo Olympics is scheduled to take place between July 24 and August 8.

The Bahrainis open their tournament campaign against Sweden on day one. They then take on Portugal on July 26, and then face Denmark two days later. Bahrain then square off with fellow-Asian side Japan on July 30, before completing their preliminaries schedule against Egypt on August 1.

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## Jadeja set to return to India action in World Test final



Ravindra Jadeja of India bats during a Test match against England (file photo)

AFP | Mumbai

Indian selectors yesterday brought back star allrounder Ravindra Jadeja into the squad for the World Test Championship final against New Zealand next month.

Jadeja and batsman Hanuma Vihari missed India's triumphant series win over England this year due to injury but are back in contention having proved their fitness.

Jadeja is an almost certain starter in the first Test final, to be played in Southampton from June 18, and five Test tour of England starting in August.

The allrounder injured a finger on India's tour of Australia in January and only came back for the Indian Premier League.

He scored 131 runs and took six wickets in seven games for Chennai Super Kings but his three for 13 performance against Virat Kohli's Royal Challengers Bangalore was a standout in a tournament cut short by the coronavirus.

Batsman K.L. Rahul, who had appendix surgery, and wicketkeeper Wriddhiman Saha, who tested positive for

**131** runs and six wickets were taken by Jadeja in seven games for Chennai Super Kings this IPL season but his three for 13 performance against Royal Challengers Bangalore was a standout

coronavirus during the ill-fated IPL, will go if they can prove their fitness.

Following their 3-1 series win against England, India booked their place in the world final as the top-ranked Test nation.

### India squad

Virat Kohli (capt), Rohit Sharma, Shubman Gill, Mayank Agarwal, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane, Hanuma Vihari, Rishabh Pant (wicketkeeper), Ravichandran Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Jasprit Bumrah, Ishant Sharma, Mohammed Shami, Mohammed Siraj, Shardul Thakur, Umesh Yadav, K.L. Rahul (subject to fitness), Wriddhiman Saha (wicketkeeper - subject to fitness)

## Guardiola says Champions League final not on his mind as City host Chelsea

AFP | London

Pep Guardiola says Manchester City's Premier League clash with Chelsea on Saturday comes too early to have any bearing on the Champions League final.

The two sides will meet again in European club football's showpiece in Istanbul on May 29.

City manager Guardiola said: "If we played the final in one week, six days, it could be but after tomorrow there are 21-22 days. Many things can happen. We just have to focus."

Victory for City this weekend would see them secure their third Premier League title in



Pep Guardiola watches his players from the touchline during a match

four years. "Always I have said the Premier League is the most important title," said Guardiola.



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PEP GUARDIOLA

"Financially for the club, maybe qualifying for the Champions League is the most important but there is no doubt this is the most important.

"The Champions League is so special, it is nice, but this means so many things. We have four

games to get two points, one victory, and we are going to try to get it."

City, who already have the League Cup in their trophy cabinet, reached the Champions League final for the first time in their history with a memorable victory over Paris Saint-Germain on Tuesday.

Guardiola insists, however, that competition has been pushed to the back of his mind for now.

He said: "There is not one thought about the final because we don't have the Premier League in our hands. When we have the Premier League then the focus will be on the Champions League."

## Nadal stunned by Zverev in Madrid to cast cloud over Roland Garros bid

AFP | Madrid

Rafael Nadal lost 6-4, 6-4 to Germany's Alexander Zverev in the Madrid Open quarter-finals yesterday, casting doubts over the Spaniard's form ahead of this month's French Open.

Nadal has now fallen early in two clay-court Masters tournaments ahead of the Grand Slam in Paris, after going out in the Monte Carlo quarter-finals last month before winning in Barcelona.

Even in Barcelona, however, Nadal needed to save a championship point to beat Stefanos Tsitsipas in the final.

World number two Nadal is hoping to clinch a 14th Roland Garros title and record-setting 21st major in the French capital.

Zverev's impressive straight-set win at the Caja Magica earns him a meeting with Dominic Thiem in the Madrid semis, in what will be a repeat of last year's US Open final, which was



Alexander Zverev returns the ball to Rafael Nadal

won by Thiem.

After losing to world number eight Andrey Rublev in Monaco, Nadal was convincingly beaten by Zverev and the spotlight will be on the 34-year-old now in Rome next week, his last tournament before heading to Paris.

It started well for Nadal when he broke Zverev to love to lead 4-2 in the first set, Zverev serving a double fault to give away the first advantage.

But the world number five immediately hit back and then pulled away, four straight games clinching him the set.

A whipping forehand down the line put Zverev up another break midway through the second and while Nadal resisted more pressure in the seventh game to hold, Zverev served out an impressive victory after an hour and 44 minutes.

Thiem had earlier come from

a set down to beat John Isner 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 and reach the last four.

The 36-year-old Isner has never been at his most comfortable on clay but he caught Thiem cold by breaking early to claim the opening set.

But Thiem ripped a forehand pass to open up a break opportunity at 3-2 in the second, which the Austrian took when Isner hit the net with a volley.



**Nadal is hoping to clinch a 14th Roland Garros title and record-setting 21st major in Paris**