

Manama, Al Najma advance in KBS Cup

TDT | Manama

On Saturday night, Manama and Al Najma secured their places in the final four of the 2025/26 Khalifa bin Salman Cup at Khalifa Sports City Arena in Isa Town. Manama edged past League B leaders Al Ettihad 71-58, while Al Najma defeated Nuwaidrat 100-80. Both sides join defending champions Muharraq and Al Ahli, who had already booked their semi-final spots a day earlier.

The night got underway with Manama matched against Al Ettihad. The League B leaders took an early edge and held a 17-16 lead at the first-quarter buzzer. Manama soon found their rhythm in the second period, tightening defensively and generating cleaner looks in transition to take a 40-36 lead into half-time. From there, they steadily extended their advantage, maintaining control through the final frame to secure a 71-58 victory.

Alex Young led the way with 20 points, while man-of-the-match Ahmed Salman added



Al Najma players leave the court focused on the task ahead

17 points and five steals, directing much of Manama's offence. Subah Hussain contributed 14 points. For Al Ettihad, Romeo

Enan posted 14 points and a remarkable 21 rebounds, while Ali Ghadeer added 12 points.

Meanwhile, at the same ven-



Manama players celebrate after booking their semi-final spot

ue, Al Najma delivered a strong performance against Nuwaidrat, running out 100-80 winners. Donovan Smith was the stand-out performer, earning Man of the Match honours with a double-double of 16 points and 14 rebounds, helping his side control the tempo and dictate the game from the opening tip.

With the quarter-finals complete, the semi-final line-up is now confirmed, with the next

stage to be played as a best-of-three series at Khalifa Sports City Arena. Al Ahli will face Muharraq, with games scheduled for March 11 at 8:30pm and March 14 at 10:30pm, while a deciding third game, if required, will take place on March 18 at 8:30pm.

In the other semi-final, Manama will meet Al Najma, with the first game set for March 11 at 10:30pm, followed by the second

on March 14 at 8:30pm. A potential third game is scheduled for March 18 at 10:30pm, should the series be tied after the opening two contests.

With the match-ups reflecting the current Zain Basketball League standings — Muharraq first, Manama second, Al Najma third and Al Ahli fourth — the semi-finals promise two compelling series between the league's top sides.

Alcaraz cruises into Indian Wells third round, Djokovic fights through

AFP | Indian Wells

World number one Carlos Alcaraz swept past Grigor Dimitrov 6-2, 6-3 to reach the third round of the Indian Wells Masters on Saturday as Novak Djokovic battled back for a three-set victory over Kamil Majchrzak.

Spain's Alcaraz was untroubled by the former world number three from Bulgaria, pushing his perfect 2026 match record to 13-0 in just 66 minutes.

Djokovic, a five-time Indian Wells champion who has struggled in recent years, had to grind for two hours and 12 minutes to subdue 57th ranked Majchrzak of Poland 4-6, 6-1, 6-2.

Alcaraz said he has been wary of Dimitrov, but even in the swirling winds on Stadium Court he was in control, firing from the baseline with power and accuracy.

He barely broke sweat and cracked plenty of smiles, saving the lone break point he faced in the second set and even getting a high-five from his opponent on a changeover.

"I think I played great," said the 22-year-old Spaniard, whose Australian Open triumph made him the youngest man to complete a career Grand Slam.

"The conditions weren't easy, a lot of wind today. I'm really, really happy just that I was able to do every goal that I set up before the match."

Alcaraz, who followed up his Melbourne triumph with a title in Doha, says Indian Wells is the perfect place to keep the wins coming.

"I love being here so much, I think that's why I'm just playing relaxed, playing calm, chilling," he said.

Although he shares the record for most Indian Wells titles with Swiss great Roger Federer, Djokovic has found the early going in California anything but relaxing in recent years.

That was true again on Sat-



Carlos Alcaraz of Spain plays a forehand against Grigor Dimitrov of Bulgaria

urday, but the 38-year-old Serb superstar -- back on court for the first time since he fell to Alcaraz in the Australian Open final -- managed to escape with a win.

Majchrzak grabbed two quick breaks in the opening set before Djokovic began to find his rhythm from the baseline and assert his superiority.

"Five weeks with no official match, I knew that the first match in such a long time will be a little bit tricky," Djokovic said.

"I felt like I had to find my A-game when it was most needed, particularly the beginning of the third, which was the case."

Djokovic added after a match marked by extended, entertaining rallies that included a 40-ball exchange in the opening game of the third.

It was an especially satisfying win for Djokovic, who lost his opener last year to Dutch lucky loser Botić van de Zandschulp and fell to lucky loser Luca Nar-

di in the third round in 2024.

He hasn't reached the quarter-finals here since his last run to the title in 2016.

Draper rallies

Britain's Jack Draper launched his title defense with a 3-6, 6-3, 6-2 victory over Spain's Roberto Bautista Agut.

Draper halted Alcaraz's bid for a rare Indian Wells threepeat in the semi-finals last year before beating Holger Rune in the final.

That victory launched his rise to fourth in the world, before an arm injury brought his 2025 season to a premature close.

"To come out and play the level I'm playing after the injury I had, I am really proud of that," Draper said.

In other matches, unseeded Brazilian Joao Fonseca saved two match points to take out 16th-seeded Russian Karen Khachanov 4-6, 7-6 (9/7), 6-4.

Seventh-seeded former



Tiberi leads Bahrain Victorious into Tirreno-Adriatico challenge



Anthony Tiberi

TDT | Manama

The 61st edition of Tirreno-Adriatico gets underway today in Lido di Camaiore, beginning a seven-stage journey across Italy that concludes on the Adriatic coast in San Benedetto del Tronto. As one of the key early-season stage races on the WorldTour calendar, the week-long contest will once again crown the "King of the Two Seas."

While the race retains its traditional start and finish locations, this year's route introduces a different dynamic. The 2026 edition does not feature a summit finish, instead favouring rolling terrain and punchy climbs that could encourage aggressive racing and late attacks. As a result, the general classification is expected to remain tightly contested, with seconds likely to prove decisive throughout the week.

For Bahrain Victorious, the GC challenge will be led by Antonio Tiberi, who returns after finishing third overall in 2025. The Italian arrives targeting another strong result despite a course that may not fully suit his strengths.

"My goal is definitely to achieve the best possible result in the general classification," Tiberi said. "Tirreno-Adriatico is a race I feel deeply connected to and one of my favourites during the season."

The absence of a major summit finish, however, could

make the fight for the overall standings more tactical.

"I would have preferred a long and demanding climb that suits me better," he admitted. "But even if the route is not perfect for my characteristics, I'm happy to be here and I'll give my best. I expect the race to be decided by seconds."

The race opens with the traditional 11.5km individual time trial in Lido di Camaiore, where the first Blue Jersey will be decided. Attention then shifts to Stage 2 (Camaiore-San Gimignano, 206km), where a 5.3km gravel sector in the finale could already shake up the standings.

Sprinters are likely to feature in Stage 3 (Cortona-Magliano de' Marsi, 221km) and possibly Stage 4 (Tagliacozzo-Martinsicuro, 213km) before the race moves into the Marche region for the final stages. The demanding Stage 6 to Camerino, with nearly 3,900 metres of climbing, is expected to be one of the decisive days.

Alongside Tiberi's GC bid, Bahrain Victorious will also chase stage victories. Sports director Franco Pellizotti confirmed Santiago Buitrago will act as co-leader but focus more on stage opportunities, with riders such as Attila Valter and Edoardo Zambanini playing key supporting roles.

"We have a very strong roster," Pellizotti said. "And we expect strong performances from the whole team."