

Al Najma remain winless at Asian Club Championship

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TDT | Manama

Al Najma suffered their second straight defeat at the 28th Asian Men's Club League Championship in Kuwait, going down 29-25 to Qatar's Al Duhail in Sabah Al Salem yesterday.

The Bahraini side, coached by Abdulrahman Mohamed, again delivered a spirited performance against one of the tournament's stronger teams.

The opening half was closely contested, with both sides exchanging momentum before finishing level at 15-15 after Al Najma briefly held control early on.

After the break, Al Duhail gradually took charge, finding better rhythm in attack and capitalising on key moments. They outscored Al Najma 14-10 in the



Mohammed Habib Ahmed in action under defensive pressure

second period to secure victory. Al Najma continued to rely on Mohamed Habib Ahmed, who produced a standout display with 10 goals from 11 attempts and was named player

of the match despite the defeat. Uros Mitrovic added three goals, while Jasim Khamis and Hasan Alsamahiji scored two each in a balanced but insufficient effort. For Al Duhail, Hamdi Hadj

Ayed led with five goals, supported by Rafael Capote, Firas Zemzemi and Amine Guehis. They finished with 29 goals from 40 shots at 73% efficiency.

The match was finely poised

at 21-21 midway through the second half after a strong spell from Ahmed. However, missed chances and defensive lapses allowed Al Duhail to regain control.

A turning point came with the dismissal of Hasan Madan, who received both red and blue cards, leaving the Bahraini side short-handed at a crucial stage.

Despite that setback, Al Najma stayed within reach deep into the final quarter, with Ahmed continuing to drive the attack, but Al Duhail's composure and clinical finishing ensured they stayed ahead in the closing stages.

The defeat leaves Al Najma still searching for their first points as the table begins to take shape. Burgan and Al Khaleej lead with five points from three matches, with Kuwait Sporting

Club close behind on four.

Al Duhail move into fourth with two points from two games, while Al Arabi also sit on two from three. At the bottom, Al Najma and Sharjah Sports Club are yet to get off the mark.

The Bahraini side, two-time Asian champions in 2017 and 2023, continue in the seven-team round-robin stage, with the top four advancing to the semi-finals on June 15 and the medal matches on June 17.

After today's rest day, Al Najma will face UAE's Sharjah SC tomorrow at 8pm as they seek their first points of the campaign. They will then take on Qatar's Al Arabi, Kuwait's Burgan Club and Saudi Arabia's Al Khaleej in their remaining preliminary-round matches, looking to carve out a path to the knockout stages.

Denmark's Eriksen in 'good spirits' after collapsing during friendly

AFP | Copenhagen

Christian Eriksen is in "good spirits", said the Danish team football doctor, despite being hospitalised after collapsing during Denmark's friendly against Ukraine, five years after suffering a cardiac arrest during the European Championship.

The 34-year-old former Man-



Christian Eriksen, Manchester United midfielder, who had a type of pacemaker inserted

ed after he collapsed in 2021, fell to the ground in the 64th minute of the match in Odense on Sunday.

Medical staff rushed onto the pitch while players from both teams gathered around him to shield the scene from television or smartphone cameras.

The referee called off the match and Eriksen was subsequently taken to hospital, hav-

ing been shielded by both sets of players as he walked off the pitch.

Denmark's team doctor Morten Boesen said Eriksen had been "briefly unconscious" but "the pacemaker responded as it should".

"I spoke to Christian this morning, and he is doing well," he said in comments posted on Instagram.

Bahrain eye Asian volleyball success in India



Celebratory moment from Bahrain's victory at the Gulf Games last month

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Bahrain's senior men's volleyball team have stepped up preparations for the Asian Men's Volleyball Championship, which will be held in Ahmedabad, India, from June 18 to 29, with hopes of making a strong impact on the continental stage.

The squad began local training sessions last week and will continue building up until departure for India. No overseas training camp is currently planned, though arrangements are being explored for friendly matches upon arrival to sharpen readiness ahead of the competition.

The team is coached by Montenegrin Ivan Joksimovic, assisted by national coach Mishaal Turki, with all selected players involved as prepa-

rations intensify.

A 17-player squad is currently in camp, with the final 14-man roster to be confirmed before the tournament. The group is expected to be largely based on the side that won gold at the Gulf Games in Qatar last month.

Bahrain travel to India with growing confidence following strong recent results, including their maiden AVC Men's Cup title in 2024, a breakthrough that established them among Asia's rising teams.

They have been drawn in a tough Pool A alongside hosts India, Australia, Chinese Taipei, Kazakhstan and New Zealand. Pool B features Qatar, South Korea, Turkmenistan, Indonesia, Thailand and Oman, with several strong contenders expected across both groups.

Muharraq, Khaldiya and Riffa secure Asian licences

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Muharraq, Al Khaldiya, and Riffa have all been granted Asian Football Confederation (AFC) club licences for the 2026-27 season after successfully meeting the federation's club licensing criteria. The approvals confirm their eligibility to compete in AFC-organised competitions next season, based on their domestic league standings.

Reigning Nasser bin Hamad Premier League champions Muharraq will represent Bahrain in the AFC Champions League Two, securing direct entry into the group stage.

League runners-up Al Khaldiya will enter the same competition through the qualifying play-offs, where they will aim to reach the group stage and extend their continental campaign.

Meanwhile, Riffa will compete in the Gulf Club Champions League as Bahrain's sole representative in the regional tournament. Their qualifica-



Action from Muharraq's AFC Champions League Two match against Al Wasl last season

tion is secured through their triumph in the Khalid bin Hamad Cup, and the club will be making its 11th appearance in the competition.

In the most recent 2025-26 AFC Champions League Two campaign, both Muharraq and Khaldiya were unable to progress beyond the group stage. Al Khaldiya finished third in Group B with one win, three draws, and two defeats, collecting six points. Muharraq also placed third in Group A, finishing with seven points from two wins, one draw, and three losses.

Despite those setbacks, Muharraq remain one of Bahrain's most successful clubs on the continental stage, having won the AFC Champions League Two title twice, in 2008 and 2021.

The latest licensing confirmation ensures continued Bahraini representation across both regional and Asian competitions, with all three clubs once again set to carry the Kingdom's challenge abroad in the 2026-27 season.