

# Reds begin push for Asian Handball Championship

Hussain Almaskati  
TDT | Manama

Bahrain's national handball team has begun preparations for the 22nd Asian Men's Handball Championship, set to take place in Kuwait from January 15 to 29. The tournament will also serve as Asia's qualifying event for the 2027 IHF World Championship in Germany, giving the competition added importance for the national squad.

The team arrives in Kuwait following a gold medal at the sixth Islamic Solidarity Games and a bronze medal at the 2024 Asian Championship on home soil, momentum that the Bahrain Handball Federation hopes to build on. Swedish head coach Robert Hedin has named a 22-player preliminary roster for the championship, with skipper Hussain Al Sayyad leading the squad. The full roster includes Mohammed Habib Nasser, Mohammed Hameed, Qassim Qambar, Hussein Mahfooz, Ali Mahmoud, Ali Redha, Jaafar Abdulshaheed, Mahmoud Jaleel, Salman Al Shuwaikh, Ali Al Asheeri, Hesham Ahmed, Hassan Al Samaheji, Has-



Bahrain handball squad celebrates at the Islamic Solidarity Games

san Mirza, Mohammed Habib Ahmed, Mohammed Abdulhussein, Sayed Ali Basim, Ahmed Al Maqabi, Ahmed Redha, Abdulla Abdulkarim, Jassim Khamis, and Mohammed Hussein Shamlooh.

Bahrain has been drawn into

Group B, where they will face Jordan, China, and Iraq in the preliminary round. The team opens its campaign against Jordan on January 16, before meeting China on January 18, and concludes the group stage against Iraq on January 20.

Only the top two teams from each group will advance to the main round, which will determine the semi-finalists and secure berths at the 2027 World Championship, ensuring that every match carries significant weight.

## England fast bowler Wood out of Ashes tour with injury



England's Mark Wood reacts during a match (file photo)

AFP | Sydney

Fast bowler Mark Wood will play no further part in the Ashes tour and is to fly home from Australia at the weekend, England announced yesterday.

Wood, 35, returned to action in the first Test in Perth after surgery kept him out for eight months, only to miss the second match in Brisbane after his left knee flared up again.

"Wood will return home later this week and will work closely with the ECB medical team on his rehabilitation and recovery," said an England statement.

Wood said he was "gutted" in a lengthy post on social me-

dia.

"After extensive surgery and months of work and rehab to get back into the Test arena, my knee just hasn't held up," he said.

Wood will be replaced in the squad by Matthew Fisher, 28, who won his only Test cap on a tour of the West Indies in 2022.

Fisher has been with the second-string England Lions squad in Australia.

"None of us expected this," said Wood, whose absence will be a big blow to England who are already 2-0 down in the five-match series.

"I came here with high expectations about making a big impact.

## Schwerm edges Talwar on countback to claim Airmech Stableford title



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Benedikt Schwerm clinched the 44th edition of the Airmech Stableford tournament on Friday, securing a hard-fought victory over Raghav Talwar on countback after both players finished tied with 37 points. The competition, held in excellent conditions, saw numerous strong performances, leaving many players reflecting on missed opportunities in a tightly contested field.

The dramatic finish underscored a day of intense scoring, marked by high peaks and low troughs.

Hussain Ahmed Salem, for



instance, started his round spectacularly with three consecutive birdies but later encountered numerous double bogeys.

The fine margins for victory were palpable, with several prize winners reportedly 'blobbing' their scores on the last two holes, thereby missing the lead by just one point.

Schwerm's winning effort, decided by the tie-breaker, was highlighted by an impressive string of five consecutive pars, confirming his strong current form.

Runner-up Raghav Talwar secured his 37 points through consistent play, steadily collect-

ing pars and bogeys throughout the round.

The prizes, handed out by Captain Steve Newall and committee assistant Ali Musbah Al Kaabi, recognized a deep field of competitors.

Adel Ali Al Fayyadh took third place with the best score among players tied on 36 points, followed by the parmaster Rashed Yaqoob Saleh in fourth.

Saleh Ali Ghadeer secured fifth place, also with 36 points, notably achieving a hole-in-one on the 4th hole. Ateeq Mujali and Gérard van Gerwen rounded out the prize winners in sixth and seventh places, respectively.

## Hay to debut for New Zealand as Blundell out of 2nd West Indies Test

AFP | Wellington

Injury-hit New Zealand will give a debut to wicketkeeper Mitch Hay in the second Test against the West Indies in Wellington after Tom Blundell was ruled out yesterday.

Captain Tom Latham said there could be at least one more debutant for Wednesday's match after his side suffered

several injuries in the drawn first Test in Christchurch.

Seamers Matt Henry and Nathan Smith are out for the rest of the series after suffering calf and side-strains respectively. Blundell was injured while batting.

One of seaming all-rounder Kristian Clarke or pace bowler Michael Rae will come in for their first Test appearance.

Latham encouraged them to bring their domestic form to the Test arena.

"Sometimes, myself included, when I've come into the squad, you want to come and do something special," Latham said.

"But at the end of the day doing what they've been doing to get to this point will hold them in good stead.



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