

NPL Matchweek 21 kicks off in style

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The penultimate round of the Nasser bin Hamad Premier League produced major shifts in the standings last night: Sitra boosted their survival hopes, Al Najma moved out of the bottom two, and Al Shabab were confirmed as relegated.

At Khalifa Sports City, Sitra, coached by Ali Abdulmajeed, produced a composed 3-1 win over Al Shabab.

Sitra started brightly and nearly struck after 10 minutes when Bekaye Wade's cross found Abdulwasea Al Matari, whose first-time volley hit the post with Rashid Al Doseri beaten.

They were handed a golden chance six minutes later after Etoke Daniel pulled Omran Alyas down during a corner. Bruno Bezerra stepped up, but Al Doseri saved the penalty to keep Al Shabab level.

Pressure continued, and Sitra earned another penalty in the 23rd minute when Karl Namnganda was fouled by Mujtaba Abdali. This time Namnganda took responsibility himself and calmly converted to give Sitra the lead.

Al Shabab, coached by Mohammed Al Muqla, responded just before half-time with



Namnganda celebrates Sitra's third goal against Al Shabab

a well-worked equaliser. Hussain Al Qassab started the move before Daniel Ilevbare Omokhoa chipped into the box for Ali Mohammed, who set up Al Qassab to finish with a superb

half-volley. Any hopes of a comeback faded midway through the second half. Othman Al Hajj's header from a corner was saved, but Namnganda reacted quickest to

smash home the rebound for his second and Sitra's third.

The win keeps Sitra 8th but two points clear of the relegation playoff zone on 24 points, while Al Shabab are officially relegat-



Al Shabab and Bahrain Club become first two teams relegated to Bahrain First Division for the 2026-2027 season

ed, finishing 11th on 14 points.

At Al Ahli Stadium, Al Najma, coached by Mohammed Al Shamlan, secured a comfortable 3-0 win over already-relegated Bahrain Club.

The highlight came after 13 minutes when captain Mohammed Eid Annad spotted goalkeeper Abdulghafoor Fateh off his line and scored from just inside the halfway line.

Al Najma thought they had doubled their lead when Ali Al Doseri finished Zachary Al Hadji's cross, but the goal was ruled offside. They eventually extended control in the 64th minute, as Al Hadji combined with Faisal Budahoom before finishing neatly inside the box.

Saleh Al Zubaidi added a late third from the penalty spot after Fateh fouled Dusan Jokovic while attempting to clear a cross.

The win lifts Al Najma to 9th on 22 points, just inside the relegation playoff zone, while Bahrain Club remain bottom on 7 points.

At Bahrain National Stadium, A'ali, coached by Vinicius Soares, strengthened their grip on fifth place with a 2-0 win over Budaiya. The defeat, however, dragged Faisal Hassan's side down to 10th in the relegation playoff zone on 21 points.

Diego Cardoso opened the scoring just before half-time with a long-range effort after spotting Abdullah Al Frieh off his line. The result was sealed late on when Hassan Abdulaziz was played through by Layton Ndukwu on the counterattack and finished confidently.

Matchweek 21 concludes tonight with three simultaneous 7PM fixtures. The headline clash sees Al Khaldiya face Muharraq at Bahrain National Stadium, where a win for Al Khaldiya would secure the league title, while Muharraq could move top heading into the final day with victory.

Elsewhere, Al Ahli meet Al Hidd at Khalifa Sports City, while Al Malkiya face Riffa at Al Ahli Stadium.

Bahrain ready for GCC Games action

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Bahrain are gearing up for a major multi-sport campaign at the fourth GCC Games, which begin today in Doha, Qatar, with the kingdom set to compete in 15 of the 18 sports on the programme.

The regional event runs from May 11 to May 22 and brings together elite athletes from all six GCC nations across a wide range of disciplines, with close to 1,100 competitors expected to take part.

According to Bahrain Olympic Committee (BOC) officials, the kingdom will be represented in archery, athletics, 3x3 basketball, billiards, boxing, handball, fencing, karate, padel, shooting, snooker, swimming, table tennis, taekwondo and volleyball. Bahrain were also due to compete in basketball, but that competition has been removed



Men's handball team during training session

from the schedule by organisers. Among the most high-profile preparations has been the men's

handball national team, training under Swedish head coach Robert Hedin at the Bahrain Handball Federation Arena in Um Al Hassam, as they look to maintain their strong record in the competition.

The GCC Games will be staged across 10 venues in Doha, including Aspire Dome, Qatar Sports Club, Khalifa International Tennis, Squash and Badminton Complex, Lusail Shooting Range, and Al Gharafa Sports Club, among others.

Bahrain arrive in Doha with a strong history in the Games. At the 2022 edition in Kuwait City, the kingdom collected an impressive 64 medals, including 20 gold, 23 silver and 21 bronze, finishing among the leading nations in the standings.

That followed 43 medals in the 2015 Games in Dammam, and 19 medals at the inaugural edition hosted in Bahrain in 2011, when the country topped the gold medal count with eight.

Maeda magic fires Celtic to derby victory



Daizen Maeda scores an overhead kick to put Celtic ahead against Rangers

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Celtic produced a strong second-half display to defeat Rangers 3-1 in the Old Firm derby at Celtic Park yesterday, a result that boosts their title hopes and deepens their rivals' poor run of form.

The visitors struck first in the ninth minute when Mikey Moore capitalised on early pressure to give Rangers a surprise lead. Celtic, however, gradually took control of possession and began to dictate the tempo, and their pressure was rewarded in the 23rd minute. Yang Hyun-Jun finished off a flowing move involving Arne Engels to bring the hosts level.

The first half ended level at 1-1, but the balance of the contest shifted after the break as Celtic increased their intensity.

Daizen Maeda became the decisive figure, first putting Celtic ahead in the 53rd minute after meeting a precise

cross from Kieran Tierney. Just four minutes later, the Japanese forward delivered the moment of the match — a spectacular overhead kick that flew into the top corner, leaving Rangers goalkeeper Jack Butland with no chance.

Rangers had little response. Their best chance came late on when substitute Bojan Miovski struck the woodwork, but the game had already slipped beyond reach. It marked a third consecutive league defeat for Rangers, their worst run in over 25 years.

The win extends Celtic's run to six straight victories in all competitions and keeps them firmly in the title race, sitting just a point behind league leaders Hearts with two matches remaining.

With momentum building and Maeda in outstanding form, Celtic head into the final stretch believing a 14th league title in 15 years is still within reach.

Bahrain's Al Sayyid Claims Saudi Crown

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Bahrain's growing influence in tennis has been underlined after Ahmed Mohammed Al Sayyid captured the Saudi First Division men's tennis title, further strengthening the kingdom's presence on the international stage.

Shaikh Khalid bin Rashid Al Khalifa, chairman of the Permanent Committee for Tennis, said the achievement reflects Bahrain's sustained investment in sport and the steady development of its athletes.

Al Sayyid secured the title while representing Saudi club Al Ibtisam, adding another international success to Bahrain's



expanding sporting record.

Shaikh Khalid also praised the role of senior sports leadership in Bahrain, noting that continued institutional backing has helped athletes compete



more effectively at regional and international levels.

He highlighted the Ministry of Interior's tennis programme, crediting it for raising performance standards and instill-

ing discipline among players through structured training and support systems.

According to him, Bahrain's tennis strategy remains focused on athlete development, increased competitive exposure, and participation in major events such as the Bahrain Open Challenger, which provides valuable experience against international opposition.

Al Sayyid's latest triumph builds on a strong 2025 campaign that has already included regional and Asian titles, alongside recognition from continental tennis authorities for his performances in junior competitions.