

## Muharraq hold off Ahli rally to take Game One



Muharraq's Bader Malabes pushes forward on a fast break

**Hussain Almaskati**  
TDT | Manama

Holder Muharraq moved a step closer to defending their Khalifa Bin Salman Cup crown after claiming a hard-fought 93-87 victory over Al Ahli in Game One of their semi-final series at Khalifa Sports City Arena in Isa Town.

The night featured two semi-final clashes, with the later matchup between Manama and Al Najma concluding after TDT's print deadline, preventing coverage in this edition. Both series are played in a best-of-three format, with the first team to win two games advancing to the championship game.

In last night's first match, Muharraq overcame an early deficit and eventually took control with a strong middle stretch before withstanding a late Ahli push. With the win, the Red Wolves now hold a 1-0 lead in the series and need just one more victory to reach the final. Game Two is scheduled for Saturday, with a deciding Game Three, if required, set for March 18.

Al Ahli had a bright start and briefly led in the opening period, but Muharraq gradually settled into the contest, closing the first quarter with a 25-16 advantage. The reigning champions continued their momentum in the second frame, stretching the lead to double digits and entering halftime ahead 58-32 after a dominant offensive display.

Muharraq extended their cushion in the third quarter to as many as 27 points, appearing set for a comfortable victory. However, Ahli staged a spirited comeback in the final period, with Hesham Sarhan's scoring trimming the deficit to just four points in the closing seconds. Muharraq held firm to secure the win.

German coach Peters Schomers' side received balanced contributions across the roster. Nicholas West led with 16 points off the bench and added eight rebounds, while Wayne Chism contributed 14 points and nine boards. Captain Bader Abdulla scored 12, and both Mohamed Ameer and Ali Hussain Rashed chipped in 10 points each.

# Nasser bin Hamad Premier League resumes tonight

TDT | Manama

The Nasser bin Hamad Bahrain Premier League returns tonight after more than two weeks without action, following recent disruptions and the staging of the King's Cup quarter-finals.

Two matchday 16 fixtures headline the return: Muharraq meet Riffa in a matchup steeped in recent history at 9:30pm at Khalifa Sports City, while Sitra face Budaiya at the same time at Bahrain National Stadium.

### Muharraq vs Riffa

The evening's marquee clash sees reigning champions Muharraq take on Riffa, two of the league's title contenders. Muharraq sit second with 36 points from 15 matches, level with leaders Al Khaldiya but trailing on head-to-head, while Riffa are third on 33 points.

Tonight also marks the first meeting between the sides since Riffa's triumph over Muharraq in the Khalid bin Hamad Cup final, adding an extra layer of intrigue. Both clubs have also advanced to the semi-finals of the 49th King's Cup, where a potential final rematch could occur.

The Red Wolves return to league play in red-hot form. In their last NPL fixture, they thrashed Bahrain Club 7-0 with goals from Sami Frioui, Edimar Ribeiro da Costa, Elliot Simoes, Soufiane Mahrouk, Abdoul Diarra, Facundo Tobares, and a second from Simoes.



Muharraq squad returns to the training pitch

Riffa, under Kuwaiti coach Mohamed Mashaan, come into tonight's fixture buoyed by a 3-0 win over Budaiya, with goals from Rodrigo Yuri, Ebrahim Al Khattal, and Ali Hassan Saeed. The victory kept them firmly in the title hunt.

### Sitra vs Budaiya

Elsewhere, Sitra, 10th on 15 points, face seventh-placed Budaiya, who have 18 points, at Bahrain National Stadium. Budaiya will aim to bounce back from their defeat to Riffa, while

Sitra seek vital points to climb out of the lower half of the table as the campaign resumes.

With the top three sides separated by just three points, tonight's action promises a crucial stage in the race for the Nasser bin Hamad Premier League title.

## Rana takes five wickets as Bangladesh crush Pakistan in ODI opener

AFP | Mirpur, Bangladesh

Bangladesh pace sensation Nahid Rana claimed his first five-wicket haul in one-day internationals to lead his team to a crushing eight-wicket win over Pakistan in their opening match yesterday.

Rana returned figures of 5-24 to skittle out Pakistan for 114, a total Bangladesh overhauled in 15.1 overs of the 50-over contest in Mirpur to take a 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

Opener Tanzid Hasan hammered an unbeaten 67 off 42 balls and put on a second-wicket partnership of 82 with Najmul Hossain Shanto, who made 27, in a statement win.

Saif Hassan fell early for four, while Litton Das remained unbeaten on three with Tanzid.

Earlier, Nahid laid the platform for victory with his outstanding spell in his seven overs to bowl out Pakistan for their lowest ODI total against Bangladesh, eclipsing the previous 161 during the 1999 World Cup.

The 23-year-old Nahid ripped through Pakistan's top order, becoming the first Bangladeshi bowler to dismiss the opposi-



Bangladesh's Nahid Rana (L) celebrates with teammates after taking the wicket of Pakistan's Shamyul Hussain

tion's top five batters in an ODI innings.

Nahid removed Sahibzada Farhan (27), Shamyul Hussain (4), Maaz Sadaqat (18), Mohammad Rizwan (10) and Salman Agha (5) as Pakistan slumped to 69-5.

He was ably supported by captain Mehidy Hasan Miraz, who took 3-29 with his off-spin.

### Scorecard

**Bangladesh 115 for 2 (Tanzid 67\*) beat Pakistan 114 (Faheem 37, Farhan 27, Rana 5-24, Mehidy 3-29)**

Senior quicks Taskin Ahmed and Mustafizur Rahman took one wicket each.

Number eight Faheem Ashraf offered brief resistance with

his 37 before being dismissed by Mustafizur as Pakistan were eventually bowled out in 30.4 overs. The performance marked a breakthrough in Nahid's young ODI career since his debut in 2024.

He had taken only five wickets in his first five matches before producing the five-wicket haul in his sixth appearance.

## India T20 hero dons disguise for unexpected train home

AFP | Mumbai

Indian cricket fans were stumped to discover that star all-rounder Shivam Dube could have been travelling incognito on a train with them, fresh from delivering a record third T20 World Cup crown.

Dube, who slammed an unbeaten 26 off just 8 balls in Sunday's final against New Zealand, was left stranded in Ahmedabad on Monday when flights to Mumbai were booked solid.

It meant he took a berth in a shared sleeper train for a seven-hour journey home -- something almost unheard of in India, where top cricketers are major celebrities and often mobbed by fans when they appear in public.

Dube told the Indian Express yesterday that he went to great lengths to get back to his son, 4, and daughter, 2, cobbling together a disguise to avoid detection from fellow passengers.

"I wore a cap, a mask, and a full-sleeved t-shirt," the 32-year-old told the newspaper.

As he snuck onto the train with his wife and a friend in tow, Dube clambered onto the



India's Shivam Dube in action (file photo)

top bunk of his assigned carriage and wrapped himself in a blanket to remain concealed for the duration of the trip.

His cover was nearly blown however when an unwitting ticket collector asked if he'd just spotted the T20 hero, before being distracted by Dube's wife.

As the journey finished Dube said he was escorted by police so "things were easy and the exit was smooth".

"They thought I was landing at the airport, but were surprised when I told them that I was travelling by train."