

# Muharraq Go Top After Win Over Al Khaldiya

Hussain Almaskati  
TDT | Manama

The Nasser bin Hamad Premier League title race will go down to the final day as reigning champions Muharraq came from behind to beat leaders Al Khaldiya 2-1 in a dramatic Matchweek 21 contest at Bahrain National Stadium last night.

Al Khaldiya arrived knowing a win would seal the championship with a game to spare, and they started like champions in waiting. Inside the opening minute, Hazza Ali almost delivered a sensational opener, striking from long range and forcing Vladan Djekic into a fingertip save that rattled the crossbar.

Their pressure was rewarded in the 11th minute. Captain Dominique Mendy arrived perfectly to meet a cutback from the right and struck a first-time finish into the top corner, giving the leaders a dream start and putting one hand on the trophy.

Muharraq, however, refused to collapse. Hussain Abdulkarim wasted a golden chance to respond, but the momentum was already tilting. In the 24th minute, Abdulkarim was brought down in the box by Mohammed Adel, and Arthur Rezende calmly converted the penalty to bring Muharraq level.

What followed was a complete swing in momentum. Eleven minutes later, Muharraq struck again. Soufiane Mahrouk kept a loose ball alive at the byline



Arthur Rezende converts from the penalty spot to bring Muharraq level

and clipped in a second delivery, where Rezende controlled brilliantly and fired a composed half-volley beyond Ricardo Silva for a rapid turnaround and his second goal of the night.

Al Khaldiya's night unravelled further with 20 minutes left goalkeeper Silva was sent off with less than 20 minutes remaining. Racing out to clear a counterattack, the Portuguese misjudged the flight of the ball and handled outside the penalty area.

Even then, they almost res-

cued a point in stoppage time. Mohammed Adel drilled a dangerous ball across the face of goal, but Joel Beya failed to apply the finishing touch from close range.

There was still time for one final twist. Muharraq thought they had sealed the result when Facundo Tobares rolled into an empty net after substitute goalkeeper Hamad Al Doseri collided with Sami Frioui, but the goal was ruled out for a foul.

The result means Muharraq

leapfrog Al Khaldiya to move top on 52 points, one ahead of Khaldiya into Friday's decisive final round. Muharraq will now face A'ali knowing victory guarantees the championship, while Al Khaldiya must beat Al Najma and hope their rivals drop points.

Elsewhere, Al Hidd climbed above Al Ahli into sixth place after a 1-0 win at Khalifa Sports City.

After a tight first half, Mohammed Al Akash scored the

decisive goal in the 58th minute – his sixth league goal of the campaign. Walid Karoui's blocked effort fell kindly into his path, and the forward made no mistake from inside the area.

The win moves Shukri Al Bajawi's side onto 27 points, while Al Ahli drop to seventh on 26.

At Al Ahli Stadium, Riffa strengthened their hold on third place with a 2-0 win over Al Malkiya.

Al Malkiya thought they had taken the lead through Isa Al

Pos	Team	Pts
1	Muharraq	52
2	Al Khaldiya	51
3	Riffa	46
4	Al Malkia	33
5	Aali Club	31
6	Al Hidd	27
7	Al Ahli	26
8	Sitra	24
9	Al Najma	22
10	Al Budaiya	21
11	Al Shabab	14
12	Bahrain SC	7

Bari midway through the first half, but the effort was ruled out for offside.

Riffa eventually broke through in the 64th minute when Wellington Machado surged down the left before finding Gabriel Monteiro, who guided his finish into the far corner.

Samuel Toscas wrapped up the victory deep into stoppage time with a spectacular half-volley from outside the area that flew into the near post.

The result keeps Riffa third on 46 points, while Al Malkiya remain fourth on 33.

Attention now turns to Friday's final round, with all 12 league sides in action and the title race still hanging in the balance.

## Asian club handball draw set for Kuwait

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The Asian Handball Federation (AHF) has confirmed that the draw for the 28th Asian Men's Club League Handball Championship will take place on May 16 at the Al Raya Hotel in Kuwait City, marking a key step in preparations for the continental tournament.

Originally postponed from 2024, the championship will now be held in Kuwait from June 6 to 15. The competition will also serve as a qualifier for the 2026 IHF Men's Super Globe, which is scheduled to take place in Egypt in October.

All matches will be staged at the Sheikh Saad Al Abdullah Sports Complex, where eight of Asia's leading clubs will compete for the continental title and a place on the global stage.

Bahrain's Al Najma will be among the contenders after a dominant domestic campaign. They finished top of the regular season in the 2025-26 Khalid Bin Hamad Bahrain



Tournament Organising Committee Chairman, Sameh Al Hajri

Handball League with 56 points, recording 17 wins, 2 draws, and just 1 defeat. Their strong performance secured qualification for the Golden Square semi-finals, which will take place later this month.

The Bahraini side will join a competitive field that includes Kuwait Club and Burgan from Kuwait, Qatar's Al Duhail and Al Arabi, UAE side Sharjah, Saudi Arabia's Al Khaleej, and a Chinese club.

## Saudi title on the line

Ronaldo targets first Saudi silverware as Nassr face Hilal in title decider

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Tonight's Riyadh derby could go a long way in deciding the Saudi Pro League title as leaders Al Nassr host rivals Al Hilal at Al Awwal Park. Kick-off is at 9pm local time, with both sides aware the result could shape the destination of the title.

Al Nassr enter the match five points clear at the top following a 4-2 win over Al Shabab, though Al Hilal still hold a game in hand as the season nears its conclusion. A victory for Nassr would put them within touching distance of a first league crown in seven years and a 10th Saudi title overall, while defeat would reopen the race.

Al Hilal, the defending champions, are aiming for a record-extending 20th league title and were boosted by Nassr's shock defeat to Al Qadsiah, which briefly reignited their challenge. Simone Inzaghi's



Cristiano Ronaldo is closed down by Darwin Nunez during the reverse fixture

side remain firmly in contention with games in hand still to play.

All eyes will again be on Cristiano Ronaldo, who recently reached 100 Saudi Pro League goals and continues his search for a first major trophy in Saudi Arabia since joining in 2022. His

form has been central to Nassr's charge this season.

The match also features another major subplot involving Ronaldo's former Real Madrid teammate Karim Benzema, who joined Al Hilal earlier this year and is chasing consecutive



league titles after leading Al Ittihad to a domestic double last season.

On the touchline, Jorge Jesus faces his former club, having guided Hilal to a league and cup double in 2024 before taking charge of Nassr.

Looking ahead, victory for Al Nassr would place them firmly on course for the title with only one match remaining against Damac, while a Hilal win would dramatically reopen the championship race ahead of fixtures against Neom and Al Fayha.