



Players cross the sand during an Awali versus Riffa golf match at Awali Golf Club in the early 1960s

A second wave for Bahrain Golf

Two Southern courses and council support aim to bring a century-old Riffa game back to young players

● One of the new courses is being built near Zallaq for Bahrain Golf Club

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

A century after Riffa men learned golf from British players and had clubs made by local welders, two new courses and municipal backing are giving the sport a fresh push in Bahrain.

The Southern Municipal Council approved a golf-course proposal by majority in its previous session, with chairman Abdullah Abdul Latif saying the sport could attract tourists, create jobs and encourage people to stay active.

He also wants more young Bahrainis to learn and play the game, which he said has deep roots in Riffa.

"It is a sport of walking and movement," he told The Daily Tribune.

One of the new courses is being built near Zallaq for Bahrain Golf Club, giving juniors a place to learn and train as they work towards Bahrain's youth and senior teams.

Many of the youngsters coming through are children of former players, Mr Abdul Latif said.

A second 18-hole championship course is planned at the Rashid Equestrian and Horseracing Club in Al Raffa,



His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa pictured playing golf 33 years ago, in an image shared by His Highness Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa



The late Mohammed Ahmed, a pioneer of Bahraini golf, pictured on the course. He became the first Bahraini to win the Bahrain Open in 1972, taking the title again in 1973 and 1978



Abdulla Abdul Latif, Southern Municipal Council chairman

place in Bahrain's history.

Men from East Riffa were among the Bahrainis who learned the game from foreign players during the early oil years. They worked as caddies, carried bags and watched the

players closely.

"They learned golf from carrying the bags," Mr Abdul Latif said. "They learned the rules, they learned English, and after some time they became better than the people who had taught them."

Getting golf clubs was another challenge.

With few clubs available, Riffa players turned to local welders, who made them from iron. Mr Abdul Latif said his father was among those craftsmen.

"There were no clubs available like there are today," he said. "They would go to the welders in Riffa and have the clubs made from iron. My father used to make them."

Golf had already been recorded in Bahrain by the early 1930s.

Major General Abdullah Al Kaabi writes in *Golf in Bahrain... A Success Story We Tell* that there is no agreed date for the first game, although Bahrainis became familiar with golf during the early years of oil exploration. He traces archive references to 1931.

After oil was found in commercial quantities at Well No. 1 near Jebel Dukhan on June 2, 1932, workers poured into the area and golf became one of the pastimes at the oil camp.

By 1933, a British Political Agent's report recorded two golf clubs in Bahrain — one in Manama and another at Bapco's camp.

Another early nine-hole course was located in the Gudaibiya-Adliya area, accord-

ing to the recollections of the late golfer Mohammed Habal, who grew up in Gudaibiya. He remembered it near Um Al Shoom spring and close to the old shoreline, with no grass greens and holes cut into natural ground. Its exact location has not been established.

A nine-hole course in Riffa Valley formally opened on January 4, 1937, bringing the game closer to the area that later became closely associated with Bahraini golf.

Awali Golf Club followed in 1952 under Bapco.

The early courses bore little resemblance to today's fairways, with sand and natural ground doing much of the work.

Mr Abdul Latif described Riffa as the home of Bahrain's golf culture, with the game passed down through families over the years.

He said His Majesty the King was a keen golfer and strong supporter of the sport, while the late Shaikh Abdullah bin Salman Al Khalifa and other senior figures also played.

Now, the two new courses could give a new generation a very different introduction to the game from the Riffa men who once learned it by carrying British golfers' bags and playing with iron clubs made in neighbourhood workshops.

Nearly a century later, the aim is to get young Bahrainis back on the course — and playing the game in numbers.



A golfer takes his shot at the Bapco Energies Bahrain Championship 2026

Bahrain, EU prepare for Gulf-EU Summit



Bahrain's Ambassador to Belgium Dr. Mohammed Ali Behzad meets the European Commission's Chief Diplomatic Adviser Simon Mordue in Brussels.

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Bahrain and the European Union are stepping up preparations for the second Gulf-EU Summit, with economic cooperation, investment and energy security among the issues discussed.

Bahrain's Ambassador to Bel-

gium and Head of its Mission to the EU, Dr Mohammed Ali Behzad, met Simon Mordue, Chief Diplomatic Adviser to the President of the European Commission.

The meeting, held as Bahrain continues its presidency of the 46th session of the Gulf Cooperation Council, focused on preparations for the sum-

mit in Saudi Arabia and ways to strengthen Gulf-European cooperation.

The officials also exchanged views on regional developments and diplomatic efforts to reduce tensions, stressing continued coordination on issues of mutual interest to support security, stability and peace across the region.



US ambassador visits Bahrain youth training camp

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US Ambassador to Bahrain Stephanie Hallett joined young participants in training challenges during a visit to the "Gadeha Junior" camp, praising its focus on discipline, teamwork and personal development.

Hallett visited the camp at the Bahrain International Exhibition Centre, where she toured the facilities and observed physical and mental training sessions.

She was briefed on the camp's programmes and development by Ahmad Al Shaikh, chairman of the organising committee and director of the Media Office of Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa.

Held under the direction of National Security Advisor and Royal Guard Commander Lieutenant General Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the camp is organised in partnership between the Royal Guard and Studio Master.

The programme combines

physical and mental training with personal and leadership development, including activities inspired by military-style training.

During the visit, Hallett also wore the camp's official uniform and took part in some of its challenges.

She praised the organisation and variety of the programmes and commended efforts to equip young participants with skills, values and experiences for their personal development and future.