

Bahrain storm into Asiad last eight

Cagers overpower Kazakhstan to set up Iran showdown

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Bahrain's senior basketball team booked their place in the quarter-finals of the 20th Asian Games with an emphatic 101-78 victory over Kazakhstan in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan, yesterday.

The result, coupled with China's 105-61 rout of defending champions the Philippines, saw Slobodan Subotic's side finish second in Group C with two wins from three matches.

The nationals will now face Group B winners Iran at Aichi International Arena tomorrow at 7am, Bahrain time, for a place in Friday's semi-finals.

Bahrain recovered from a slow start against Kazakhstan, overturning a 12-7 deficit with a devastating 21-3 run to close the opening quarter ahead 28-15.

Their opponents reduced the gap to eight midway through the second period, but the Reds responded by scoring 19 of the next 30 points to take a 55-39 advantage into half-time.

The contest remained firmly in their control after the restart. They extended their lead to 21 by the end of the third quarter and moved as many as 27 clear



Post-match celebrations in the dressing room

during the fourth before passing the century mark in the closing minute.

JaKarr Sampson led the way with 23 points, nine rebounds and six assists, while Mustafa Hussain contributed 20 points and eight assists. Elijah Thomas added 16 points, Ahmed Haji scored 14 off the bench and Uros Ilic chipped in with eight.

Daniil Severgin paced Kazakhstan with 16 points, while Anton Bykov finished with 14

points and 10 rebounds.

Bahrain also forced 21 turnovers, converting them into 24 points, and scored 23 fast-break points during an energetic all-round display.

The victory completed an encouraging preliminary-round campaign for the kingdom, which began with an 89-85 upset of the Philippines before a 105-59 defeat to unbeaten group winners China.

Iran reached the knockout

stage after recovering from a 59-53 opening defeat to Qatar with successive victories over Chinese Taipei and Jordan.

The other quarter-finals will see Chinese Taipei face hosts Japan, China meet Saudi Arabia and South Korea take on Jordan.

The semi-finals take place on Friday, followed by the bronze and gold medal games on Sunday.



Bahrain Olympic Committee vice-president HH Shaikh Isa bin Ali Al Khalifa congratulates coach Slobodan Subotic after the game



Mustafa Hussain on the ball

HH Shaikh Nasser Marks Comeback with Podium



Shaikh Nasser, right, alongside UAE rider Salem Mohammed Al Ketbi

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His Highness Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa finished second in the 161.8-kilometre Portugal International Endurance Race as he continued his preparations for this year's World Endurance Championship.

The six-stage event served as an international qualifier for the global showpiece and attracted riders from several countries.

Belgium's Louna Schuiten claimed victory, with Shaikh Nasser crossing the finish in second for Bahrain's Royal Endurance Team.

UAE rider Salem Mohammed Al Ketbi took third place, followed by Saudi Arabia's Faisal Mohammed Al Qurashi in fourth, while Shaikh Nasser's teammate Abdulrahman Khalid Al Khatri finished fifth.

The result represents another important step towards the FEI Endurance World Championship, which will be held at Butheeb International Endurance Village in Abu Dhabi from December 14 to 20. The main 160km championship ride is scheduled for December 19.

For Shaikh Nasser, however, the podium carried significance beyond qualification.

The Royal Endurance Team captain suffered a fracture after falling from his horse during the Summer Spirit Race in Slovakia this July. He had warned fellow riders about the uneven ground moments before he fell.

Despite the injury, he continued for the remaining nine kilometres. After losing movement in his arm, Shaikh Nasser pinned it in place and rode one-handed, before beginning to drift in and out of consciousness as he made his way to the finish.

Looking back on the incident after his latest result, Shaikh Nasser wrote on social media: "The fall was never the end of the story. I fell, I got hurt, I rebuilt, and I came back to stand on the podium again. "The lesson is simple. Falling doesn't defeat you, quitting does."

Shaikh Nasser, His Majesty the King's Representative for Humanitarian Work and Youth Affairs, said international qualifiers such as the Portugal race are an important part of completing the team's requirements for December's championship.

He added that the Royal Endurance Team will continue its programme in the coming months, focusing on preparing its riders and horses for the challenges ahead.

Muharraq Begin Asian Quest

Two-time champions face Arkadag in Turkmenistan opener

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Muharraq begin their AFC Champions League Two campaign today when they face Turkmenistan's Arkadag at Arkadag Stadium.

The Group B opener kicks off at 4.45pm, Bahrain time, with the Red Wolves arriving on a high after picking up their first domestic win of the season last Thursday.

The Bahraini champions share the group with the UAE's Al Jazira and Iran's Gol Gohar Sirjan, with the four sides playing each other home and away.

Interim coach Adnan Ayoub put the finishing touches to his plans during the team's final training session in Turkmenistan.

"We know that we are facing a strong team with a number of

quality players, some of whom represent their country," Ayoub said at yesterday's pre-match press conference.

"We have analysed the team and prepared for the match in the required way. We expect a tough contest and will go into it with focus and confidence to produce our best."

Ayoub also stressed the responsibility that comes with representing the club.

"Our aim is to represent Muharraq in a way that reflects its history and stature, and to produce a good match and a performance worthy of the club's name and supporters."

That history includes two triumphs in Asia's second-tier club competition. Muharraq first lifted the AFC Cup in 2008 before winning it again under Isa Al Saadoon in 2021.

Al Saadoon's second stint in



Goalkeeper Sayed Mohammed Jaafar in training

charge recently came to an end after the side took just one point from the opening two matches of their domestic title defence.

The AFC Champions League

Two replaced the AFC Cup as the continent's second-tier tournament for the 2024-25 season.

Veteran goalkeeper Sayed Mohammed Jaafar was part of both

title-winning sides and knows better than most what success in Asia requires.

"We know how important the start of any competition is, especially the first match," Jaafar said.

"We know our opponents have good players and we have the information that will help us approach the game in the right way. We came here to perform well and will give everything we have to achieve the result we are looking for."

The veteran is among a 24-player travelling squad that also includes Vladan Dekic, Ashraf Waheed, Husain Jameel, Amine Benaddi, Bruno Santos, Ahmed Bughammar, Ahmed Rabeea, Mohamed Al Banna, Abdulla Al Khalasi, Hasan Al Karrani, Mohamed Al Hardan, Abdulwahab Al Malood, Soufiane Mahrouk, Ahmed Al Sherou-

qi, Hanan Abdulwahab, Anderson Leite, Arthur Rezende, Rijad Kobilar, Abdoul Karim Diarra, Facundo Tobares, Husain Abdulkarim, Edimar da Ribeiro da Costa Junior and Abdulla Jamal.

Venezuelan midfielder Bryant Ortega, who recently joined on loan from Saudi Arabian side Al Ittihad until the end of the season, was not included in the travelling list published by the club.

Meanwhile, the kingdom's other representatives, Al Khaldiya, open their Group A campaign against Uzbekistan's Nasaf tomorrow at Bahrain National Stadium at 7pm.

Goran Tomi's side enter an internal camp today before holding their official training session at the National Stadium at 5.30pm. Nasaf, who were due to arrive in Bahrain last night, are scheduled to train at the same venue at 7pm.