Muharraq, Khaldiya set for ACL Two openers

Bahraini giants launch Asian campaigns tomorrow night



Muharraq players line up before a match

Muharraq face Al Wehdat

Al Khaldiya meet Qatar's Al Ahli

ACL Two group stage runs till December

TDT | Manama

ahrain's Muharraq and

Two campaigns, which kick guise as the AFC Cup (2008 and menistan. off tomorrow. Both clubs will 2021), now line up in Group A play their opening fixtures on alongside Al Wehdat of Jordan, Wednesday night.

The ACL Two is Asia's sec- of Iran. ond-tier club competition, newly reformatted beneath the AFC Champions League Elite and above the AFC Challenge League. It features 32 teams from 22 associations in a home-and-away group stage.

Muharraq debut in new format

Muharraq return to continen-AFC Champions League (ACL) the competition in its former jon, and FC Arkadag of Turk- December 24, followed by the

Al Wasl of the UAE, and Esteghlal

They open against Wehdat at time. home on Wednesday at Shaikh Ali bin Mohammed bin Isa Al Khalifa Stadium in Arad, with kick-off at 9:15pm.

Khaldiya face stern test in

take part in ACL Two for a sec-Al Khaldiya are putting tal action as Bahrain Premier ond straight season. They are South Korea, Australia, and bethe finishing touches on League champions. The record drawn in Group B with Qatar's yond. preparations for their 2025-26 Bahraini side, twice winners of Al Ahli, Uzbekistan's PFC Andi-

Their campaign begins against Al Ahli on Wednesday at Al Thumama Stadium in Doha, with play starting at 7pm Bahrain

Wide field of challengers

Both Bahraini clubs compete in the West Asia region, which also includes the likes of Sepahan (Iran), Mohun Bagan (India), and Saudi giants Al Nassr. King's Cup holders Khaldiya Groups E to H cover East Asia, knockouts in early 2026 and the Shaikh Salman bin Ibrahim with teams from China, Japan,

The group stage runs until



Muharraq twice lifted the AFC Cup in 2008, 2021

final on May 16.

Abdulrahman: "Strong and balanced competition"

Former Muharraq star reach.

Mahmood Abdulrahman, MVP of the 2008 edition, said the new ACL Two promises exciting foot-

"The competition this season looks a strong and balanced one with teams now more tactically advanced," he told afc. com. "The new system has exceeded expectations, producing many strong and exciting matches.

He credited AFC president Al Khalifa for Asian football's recent progress, noting that growing exposure on digital platforms is boosting the game's

Al Hala AWCC Campaign unravels with 4th Straight Loss

Diop's doubledouble not enough

Al Fetat dominate final quarter surge

Hussain Almaskati TDT | Manama

 ${f B}$ ahrain's Al Hala suffered their fourth consecutive defeat at the 26th Arab Women's Clubs Championship last night, losing 71-78 to Kuwait's Al Fatat in Medina, Saudi Arabia.

In a rollercoaster contest Action from the match featuring seven lead changes

Senegalese standout Yacine blocks. Diop continued her strong tour-



to storm back and steal the win. four assists, two steals and three rotations.

and wild momentum swings, Al rebound double-double along- and their defense had no an-Hala appeared poised to snap side five assists, three steals and swers as Al Fatat turned up the their losing streak after build- two blocks. But despite her im- tempo. Kuwait's representatives ing a 13-point advantage in the pact, Al Hala couldn't contain out-rebounded Hala 56-42 and third quarter. But a disastrous Al Fatat's Raneem AlGedawy, dished out nearly double the fourth period, where they were who posted a dominant 27 point, assists (31 to 17), exploiting Hatoday at 5pm Bahrain time for outscored 6-26, allowed Al Fatat 24 rebound performance with la's tired legs and inconsistent

The loss adds to a brutal week Hala led for over 21 minutes, for the Bahraini side, who prenament, recording a 23 point, 13 but their offense sputtered late viously fell in close defeats to in their final match.



Al Hala led in most games, but lost them

Algeria's Cosider (74-76), UAE's Sharjah (87-88), and Saudi hosts Al Ula (92-100). Now 0-4, Hala face a steep climb to reach the medal rounds, needing wins in their final two games. Jordan's Fuheis and Kuwait's Al Qurain are up next, and they'll need help elsewhere in the standings.

Al Hala return to the court a must-win matchup against Fuheis. They will then enjoy rest days on Tuesday and Wednesday, before taking on Al Qurain

AC Milan keeper Maignan escapes calf tear against Bologna

AFP | London

 ${
m F}$ rance goalkeeper Mike Maignan has not had a repeat of the calf tear which kept him out of the last World Cup, AC Milan said today.

Maignan limped off the field injured seven minutes after half-time of AC Milan's 1-0 win over with Bologna in Serie A yesterday night, and was replaced by Pietro Terracciano. Mike Maignan in action

However, Milan said in a statement said that tests carand 2023.



Milan added that defender ried out this morning excluded Strahinja Pavlovic also escaped a serious injury similar to the a serious injury to his left one which kept him out of acthigh, add that "both players tion for months between 2022 will be assessed on a day-byday basis".

Athletic 'not afraid' of Arsenal on Champions League return: Inaki Williams

AFP | Bilbao

thletic Bilbao captain Inaki Athletic bilbao capalana Williams said his team have no fear ahead of their Cham-Premier League giants Arsenal. be back among the elite.

The Basque side, who only

competition for the first time since 2014, having qualified for only the third occasion in their history.

Ghana international Williams pions League opener against said the squad were thrilled to

"So many of us are looking employ players born in the re- forward to debuting in the Inaki Williams

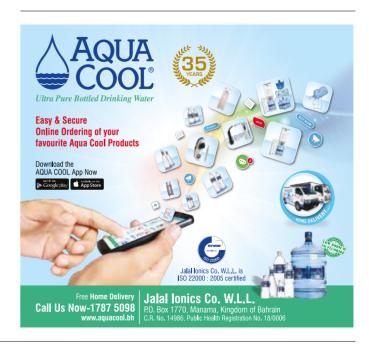


gion, are back in Europe's top Champions League. for years we've fought for a day like to-

morrow and we want to grow our dream," Williams told reporters.

"We are not afraid of anyone, it will be a really nice game."

Inaki Williams' younger sibling Nico Williams is set to miss the clash against last season's semi-finalists at the San Mames stadium with a groin injury.



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