

Three-time World Champion Michael van Gerwen wins maiden Bahrain Darts Masters title

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BIC, Sakhir – Michael van Gerwen from the Netherlands was this evening crowned champion of the 2026 Bahrain Darts Masters, which came to a close at Terminal 4 by Beyon in Exhibition World Bahrain.

Van Gerwen, the World Number four and a three-time World Champion, secured the title in the Kingdom for the first time after defeating fellow-countryman and World Number three Gian van Veen 8-6 in a hugely thrilling all-Dutch final, played in front of a large and energetic crowd of supporters, many of whom were in colourful fancy dresses and costumes.

Van Gerwen was competing in the Bahrain Darts Masters for only the second time,

and he improved on his runner-up finish in the 2024 edition of the event.

Following the title-decider, which was played best-of-15 legs, van Gerwen was presented with the tournament's glittering champion's trophy, molded in the form of a palm tree. Bahrain International Circuit (BIC) Chief Executive Shaikh Salman bin Isa Al Khalifa and CBX Managing Director Roy Boutagy were on hand for the awarding.

The 2026 Bahrain Darts Masters was organised by BIC, the Professional Darts Corporation (PDC), and sports promoter CBX, and was supported by Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority.

Van Gerwen joins last year's winner Stephen Bunting, reigning back-to-back World Cham-



pion and 2024 winner in Bahrain Luke Littler, and 2022-23 World Champion and the first-ever victor in the Kingdom Michael Smith as title winners in the Bahrain Darts Masters.

This year's event marked the fourth edition of the prestigious competition, which was held as the first round of the 2026 PDC World Series of Darts.

In this evening's final, van

Gerwen took a 3-0 lead but van Veen won the next two legs to narrow the deficit. Van Gerwen got back on track by taking the sixth leg to complete half the job in his tile ambitions. He

then won the next two legs for a commanding 6-2 advantage, but van Veen battled back with three straight to make it 5-6. The pair then split the next two legs to set up a dramatic finish, and with van Gerwen leading 7-6, he made the most of the opportunity to seal the crown.

Earlier in the evening, Van Gerwen was first to secure his place in the title affair after defeating 2020-21 World Champion Gerwyn Price 7-2 in the best-of-13 legs semi-finals. In the other contest of the last four, van Veen beat former World Matchplay champion Nathan Aspinall 7-4 to book his place in the championship match.

In the best-of-11 legs quarter-finals, a pair of stunning outcomes kicked off the programme, with Littler losing to Price 2-6 and Bunting being ousted by van Gerwen 4-6. Aspinall followed suit with a 6-3 victory over 2023-24 World Champion and current World Number two Luke Humphries, and then van Veen completed the semi-final cast with a 6-1 triumph against Dutch darts star Danny Noppert.

Bahrain open Asian handball championship with emphatic win

Verstappen motivated as Red Bull braces for F1 changes



Max Verstappen
AFP | London



Team Bahrain celebrate after convincing opening victory

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

Bahrain made a comfortable start to their 22nd Asian Men's Handball Championship campaign yesterday, cruising to a convincing 32-21 win over Jordan in their opening Group B match at the Saad Al Abdullah Sports Hall in Kuwait City. The result gives the kingdom an ideal platform in the continental tournament, which serves as a qualifier for the 2027 IHF Men's Handball World Championship in Germany.

Robert Hedin's men asserted control from the opening minutes, racing into an early lead through Salman Al Showaikh, who was instrumental through-

out the contest. The Bahrainis' defensive discipline and quick transitions troubled the Jordanians, allowing them to steadily build an advantage and go into the break with a commanding 17-10 lead.

Jordan attempted to respond early in the second half, but Bahrain quickly regained momentum. Al Showaikh continued to lead the attack, while Mohamed Nasser, Ali Alasheer, and Qasim Qambar all contributed crucial goals as Bahrain stretched their lead further. The Bahrainis remained composed in the final stages, efficiently closing out the match to secure an 11-goal victory and underline their credentials as one of the tournament favourites.

Al Showaikh was deservedly named Man of the Match after delivering a standout performance, scoring six goals and orchestrating Bahrain's offensive play with authority and composure. Following the match, Bahrain international Mohammed Habib highlighted the importance of the opening win. "We achieved the most important thing at the start of the tournament," he said. "Opening matches are always difficult, but we were ready for the challenge and managed to overcome a match that was not easy at all."

He added: "Every game in this championship is tough. This win gives us strong motivation for what's coming. We didn't come here just to participate, we are taking it step by step and treating



Bahrain's Jasim Khamis in action against Jordan



Salman Al Showaikh named Man of Match

every match on its own."

Bahrain return to action tomorrow when they face China at 6pm, before concluding the preliminary round against Iraq

on Tuesday at 4pm. The top two teams from each group will advance to the main round as the race for World Championship qualification intensifies.

Four-time world champion Max Verstappen said he's keen to get to grips with the new car Red Bull unveiled on Thursday for a 2026 Formula One season of massive change.

The team unveiled the livery for their new cars before a few hundred guests at Detroit's Michigan Central Station less than two months before the season opens in Melbourne on March 7.

New rules for 2026 see aerodynamic changes to make cars lighter and smaller along with modifications to engine specifications to make for a greater contribution from electric power in the hybrid units.

"There is a lot of unknown, there are big changes in the engine, in the car," Verstappen said. "Initially I'll take time to adjust during test days. The motivation is very high."

"It always takes a bit of time to get used to things," he added. "You need to understand where the most performance is to be found, get comfortable in the car."