

Champions on the move

Bahrain drawn into tough GCC Games group in Doha

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

Bahrain's senior men's handball team heads into the 4th GCC Games as one of the leading contenders following yesterday's draw in Doha, Qatar.

The regional event runs from May 11 to 22 and brings together all six GCC nations, with handball expected to be among the most competitive disciplines.

The Kingdom's representatives face a demanding group stage, opening against Kuwait on May 15 before meeting Oman on May 17 and Saudi Arabia on May 19. They then take on hosts Qatar on May 20 in a rematch of the Asian final, before concluding their campaign against the United Arab Emirates on May 21.

With the schedule confirmed, attention immediately turns to preparation. The Bahrain Handball Federation has named a 25-player squad that has already begun training under head coach Robert Hedin at the BHF Arena in Um Al Hassam.

The squad has a settled look heading into the tournament, with several familiar names forming its core.

Hussain Al Sayyad, Mohammed Abdullhussain and Mohammed Habib Ahmed are expected to shoulder much of the leadership responsibility. They are supported by a wider group including Hassan Madan, Jassim Khamis, Ahmed Redha, Salman Alshowaikh, Ali Al Asheeri and Qassim Qambar.

With five matches in seven days, Bahrain will need to lean heavily on squad depth. Rotation and defensive discipline could prove decisive over the course of the group stage.

Bahrain arrive in Doha on the back of a landmark year, having reached the podium in every GCC Games edition, winning gold in 2011 and silver in 2015 and 2022.

More significantly, they claimed their first continental title earlier this year by



Mohammed Habib celebrates in Bahrain's Asian final against Qatar, whom they meet again at the Games

defeating Qatar in the Asian Men's Handball Championship final, securing qualification for the 2027 IHF World Championship in Germany. That breakthrough in Kuwait has shifted expectations, placing them firmly among the teams to beat.

The rematch with Qatar stands out as the key fixture of the group stage, carrying both competitive and psychological weight.

Saudi Arabia and Kuwait also represent traditional threats in a tightly balanced group.

The tournament will be staged across multiple venues in Doha, including Aspire Dome, Qatar Sports Club, Al Gharafa SC, Al Arabi SC, and the Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club.

Bahrain enters the competition not as outsiders, but as proven champions expected to deliver once again.

Silva to leave Man City at end of season



Manchester City's Portuguese midfielder #20 Bernardo Silva (L) vies with Arsenal's German midfielder #29 Kai Havertz (R)

AFP | London

Bernardo Silva will leave Manchester City when his contract expires at the end of the season, the Premier League club announced yesterday as they hailed his "incalculable" contribution to our "greatest sustained period of success".

The 31-year-old Portuguese playmaker, who is the current club captain, joined City from Monaco for £43 million (\$58 million) in 2017 and has gone on to make over 450 appearances for manager Pep Guardiola's side, winning 15 major trophies, including six Premier League titles and one Champions League as well as this season's League Cup.

He has also scored 76 goals and provided 77 assists to date, with Silva also involved as City won the 'treble' of Premier League, FA Cup and Champions League in the 2022/23 season.

Silva recently moved into the top 10 of all-time City appearance holders, overtaking several notable former players, including David Silva, Paul Power and Willie Donachie.

"Manchester City can confirm Bernardo Silva will leave the club this summer," said a City statement.

"Bernardo will now focus on seeking to try and ensure his remaining time at City ends with even more silverware, with Pep Guardiola's side still very much in the hunt to win both the Premier League title and the FA Cup.

"In short, he will be deservedly remembered both as one of City's finest and most popular players of all time."

Confirming his departure from the Etihad on his Instagram page, Silva wrote: "When I arrived nine years ago, I was following a dream of a little boy, wanting to succeed in life, wanting to achieve great things.

Caicedo Extends Chelsea Stay With New Deal



Moises Caicedo
TDT | agencies

Chelsea midfielder Moises Caicedo has agreed a new long-term contract with the club, extending his stay at Stamford Bridge until 2033, according to reports.

The 24-year-old Ecuador international had been seeking improved terms after playing a key role in Chelsea's recent successes, including their UEFA Conference League and FIFA Club World Cup triumphs last season. He initially joined the club from Brighton & Hove Albion in 2023 for a then British-record fee that could rise to £115 million.

Chelsea view Caicedo as a central figure in their long-term project and among the leading midfielders in world football.

Muharraq Go Top, Budaiya Boost Survival Hopes

Hussain Almaskati
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Matchweek 18 of the Naser bin Hamad Premier League, which began yesterday, delivered major shifts at both ends of the table. Muharraq moved to the top of the standings, while Budaiya boosted their survival hopes with a late win over Al Najma

At Khalifa Sports City Stadium, reigning champions Muharraq edged Al Hidd 1-0 in a tightly contested match that opened up after the interval. The Red Wolves initially thought they had taken the lead in the 33rd minute when Sami Frioui finished a flowing move involving Soufiane Mahrouk and Bruno Santos, but the effort was ruled out for offside following a VAR check.

The decisive moment arrived in the 66th minute, when Frioui reacted quickest inside the box to turn home from close range after Mahrouk and Edimar Ribeiro da Costa combined to break down the Al Hidd defence. Muharraq controlled the game from there, and they were briefly denied a chance to double their lead when they appealed for a penalty in the 72nd minute after a handball by Rashid Boumousous. However, referee



Sami Frioui celebrates his winning goal with teammate Soufiane Mahrouk

Mohamed Bunafoor reviewed the incident and overturned the claim after VAR intervention, awarding a goal kick instead.

That proved enough to secure all three points and send Muharraq top on 43 points, with a game in hand over Al Khaldiya,

while Al Hidd remain fifth on 24 points after a disciplined display undone by a single moment.

At Al Ahli Stadium, Budaiya

came from behind to defeat Al Najma 2-1 in a match defined by quick replies and late drama. Al Najma struck first in the 36th minute when Mohammed Abdulqayoom met a set piece with a composed volley, but their lead did not last long. Six minutes later, Kablan Davy N'Goma latched onto a precise through ball from Clement Ogobe to bring Budaiya level before the break.

The contest swung late on when Al Najma captain Saud Al Hazza was sent off for a foul on N'Goma, conceding a penalty in the process. Although N'Goma's initial spot-kick was saved, VAR ruled that goalkeeper Ammar Mohammed Jaffar had stepped off his line, forcing a retake that Naser Mohammed converted to complete the turnaround.

Al Najma pushed for a late equaliser, but Zachary Hadji missed a clear opportunity as Budaiya held firm under pressure. The result leaves Al Najma in the relegation play-off zone in 9th place on 19 points, while Budaiya climb to 7th on 21 points, easing their survival concerns.

League action continues tonight with Bahrain Club facing Al Ahli at 5:25pm, followed by Sitra meeting Al Khaldiya at 7:35pm at Khalifa Sports City Stadium.