



His Highness Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa attends the REHC concluding round

Nine-Race Card Showcases Talent

● **Winners from multiple stables**

TDT | Manama

The Future Stars Series, sponsored by Singapore Gulf Bank (Bahrain Bred), concluded during the 28th race of the 2025/2026 season at the Rashid Equestrian and Horseracing Club racecourse in Al Raffa, Sakhir, in the presence of senior

members of the Royal Family and a large gathering of racing enthusiasts.

His Highness Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Minister of the Prime Minister's Court and Chairman of the REHC High Committee, attended the concluding round, alongside His Highness Shaikh Faisal bin Rashid bin Isa Al Khalifa, Vice President of the Supreme Council for Environment and Deputy Chairman of the REHC High Committee.

The race meeting featured the Palace Enterprises Cup in addition to several REHC Cups, forming part of an evening marked by competitive racing and strong public engagement. A number of Their Highnesses and Excellencies, as well as representatives of sponsoring entities, were also in attendance, contributing to the lively atmosphere.

Winners across the series were honoured during the closing ceremony. His Highness Shaikh Ali bin Mohammed bin

Salman Al Khalifa secured the SGB Future Stars Sprint Cup, presented by Singapore Gulf Bank Vice Chairman Ali Moosa, and also received the REHC Cup for the eighth round from Acting Chief Executive Officer Yusuf Osama Buheji.

The evening's programme featured nine races, with victories shared among multiple stables, reflecting the competitive strength and growing depth of Bahrain's horse racing sector.

Bahrain face demanding volleyball schedule

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Bahrain's senior men's volleyball team face a demanding schedule at the fourth GCC Games in Doha, with a string of fixtures that will immediately test their medal ambitions.

The volleyball draw took place on Thursday at Lusail Hall at the Qatar Olympic Committee headquarters, alongside the handball competition. Representatives from all six GCC nations were present, with the final schedule confirmed yesterday following a series of adjustments.

Bahrain open their campaign against Oman on May 16, before quickly turning around to face the United Arab Emirates the following day. After a rest day, they resume against Kuwait on May 19, followed by a key clash with hosts Qatar on May 20. They close their group stage against Saudi Arabia.

The nationals arrive as one of the tournament's leading contenders, underpinned by strong recent form. Bahrain claimed silver at the previous edition in Kuwait City in 2022 and, before that, secured consecutive gold medals in Dammam and Bahrain, reinforcing their status as a consistent force in regional volleyball.

Much of that core remains in-



Coach Josserand and his players celebrate winning bronze at last November's Islamic Solidarity Games

tact. The squad retains its established group of Mohamed Anan, Hassan Al Warqaa, Mohamed Yaqoob, Ali Ebrahim, Mahmood Abdulwahid, Mohammed Jassim, and Sayed Hashim Isa, providing continuity, stability, and cohesion across the team.

That continuity is further boosted by the return of captain Nasser Anan, who rejoins the side after a disciplinary suspension. His presence adds experience and leadership at a

key moment in the campaign.

The team are led by French head coach Arnaud Josserand, with Bahrain continuing under an international coaching structure aimed at maintaining strong regional results.

The GCC Games feature 19 sports staged across multiple venues in Doha, with volleyball and handball among the headline team competitions. Matches will be spread across 10 venues, including Aspire Dome,

Qatar Sports Club, Khalifa International Tennis, Squash and Badminton Complex, Lusail Shooting Range, and Al Gharafa Sports Club.

Beyond the GCC Games, Bahrain will also use the tournament as preparation for the 2026 AVC Men's Volleyball Cup in India, which begins on June 20. Josserand's side enter that competition as reigning champions, having won the 2025 title.

Alcaraz withdraws from Madrid Masters after wrist injury

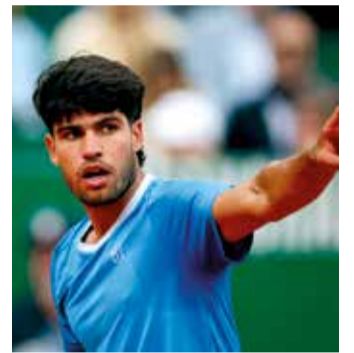
AFP | Madrid

Carlos Alcaraz withdrew from the Madrid Masters yesterday, increasing concerns over whether he will be able to defend his Roland Garros title.

The world number two played in the Barcelona Open first round before pulling out of the tournament on Wednesday because of a wrist injury.

"There is news that is incredibly hard to share. Madrid is home, one of the most special places on the calendar for me, and that's why it hurts so much not to be able to play here for the second year in a row," wrote Alcaraz in a post on X.

"It especially hurts not to be able to be there in front of my people, at a tournament that is



Carlos Alcaraz

so special."

Earlier yesterday 24-time Grand Slam winner Novak Djokovic also pulled out of the Madrid Open, which begins on April 21.

The French Open, which Alcaraz won back-to-back in 2024 and 2025, starts on May 18.

Slot backs Ekitike to recover from 'devastating' Achilles injury

AFP | London

Liverpool manager Arne Slot believes Hugo Ekitike can come back even stronger from a ruptured Achilles tendon that has ended the French striker's season, and his dreams of playing in the World Cup.

Ekitike suffered the injury against his former club Paris Saint-Germain on Tuesday as Liverpool bowed out of the Champions League.

The 23-year-old had scored 17 goals in his debut season in England after a £69 million (\$93 million) move from Eintracht Frankfurt and was almost certain to make Didier Deschamps's France squad for the World Cup.

"Devastating for him," said Slot yesterday with Ekitike expected to be out for at least nine months.

"Missing out on so many special moments, but he's not the first and will not be the last player that experienced something like this in the start of his career.

"There are so many examples of players that came back even stronger and that's the challenge he has now.

"I'm 100 percent sure he will be one of those that in 10 to 15 years say, 'maybe this injury even helped me to become stronger and become even more ready to perform even at a higher level than I did before.'"

The loss of Ekitike was also a huge blow to Liverpool's hopes of securing a place in the Champions League next season.

Slot's men sit fifth in the Premier League, which will be enough to qualify, and enjoy a four-point lead over sixth-placed Chelsea.

Bahrain head to Tbilisi

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Bahrain will face Georgia in a friendly in Tbilisi on 5 June, a fixture that comes as part of their wider preparations for a busy international cycle. The match is scheduled around the FIFA international window and offers them a chance to test themselves against European opposition away from home, adding variety to their build-up work.

That preparation is being shaped with several major targets in mind. Later this year, Bahrain will head into the Gulf Cup as defending champions and aim to retain the title they secured in the previous edition. That campaign is expected to set the tone for what follows, with competitive momentum



Bahrain's senior men's football national team

carrying into 2027.

Looking further ahead, attention will shift to the AFC Asian Cup, where Bahrain have already booked their place. They enter the draw in Pot 3, alongside teams such as Thailand,

China, Palestine, Vietnam, and Tajikistan. Across the wider field, Asia's leading sides — including Japan, South Korea, Iran, and Australia — are also confirmed, while hosts Saudi Arabia qualify automatically.

For the nationals, who are currently ranked 91st in the FIFA world rankings, the fixture against Georgia fits into a broader effort to expose Talajic's squad to different styles and conditions.

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