

Al Ahli Hold Firm as Riffa Strike Late

TDT | Manama

Matchweek 18 of the Nasser bin Hamad Premier League continued yesterday with Al Ahli edging Bahrain Club 2-1, while Riffa struck late to beat A'ali 1-0 and stay in the upper half of the table.

At the Bahrain National Stadium, the match started at pace. Al Ahli led in the 8th minute when Abdulla Al Hashash met a corner from João Victor Coutinho, heading in his 10th goal of the season and moving within two of the league's top scorer, Edimar Ribeiro da Costa.

Bahrain Club responded in the 12th minute. Mohamed Jamal's long throw was flicked on by Sultan Al Salatneh, and Jassim Khalil headed home with a deflection off Hamed Toure helping it in.

The game turned in the 17th minute when Khalil was sent off for a reckless two-footed challenge on Atton Paved Job Bah, leaving Bahrain Club with ten men for over 70 minutes.

Al Ahli thought they had retaken the lead on the half-hour mark when Hashash tapped in from Hussain Haroona's cross, but it was ruled offside. Their pressure told three minutes later as Atton Paved Job Bah reacted to a loose ball and set up Faisal Habib, who finished into



Abdulla Al Hashash in action during Al Ahli's victory

the bottom corner.

Al Ahli controlled thereafter, limiting Bahrain Club's chances. The win lifts them to seventh on 23 points, while Bahrain Club remain bottom on seven points, looking increasingly destined for relegation.

At Khalifa Sports City, Riffa dominated possession against A'ali but struggled to break through in the first half.

Riffa coach Mohamed Mashaan watched from the

stands due to a disciplinary suspension, as his side were repeatedly frustrated by goalkeeper Omar Rajab, who kept A'ali level with a series of saves. The pattern continued into the second half as Riffa pressed without reward.

In the 80th minute, Vinicius Vargas was denied from close range when Rajab tipped his effort onto the bar.

Just when A'ali looked set for a point, Riffa struck in the 89th



Ali Madan celebrates scoring Riffa's late winner

minute. A short corner opened space on the left, and Rodrigo Yuri crossed for substitute Ali Madan to head home.

The result keeps Riffa third on 37 points, six points off the top, while A'ali remain fourth on 25.

Matchweek 18 concludes today with Al Malkiya facing Al Shabab at 5:25pm, before Sitra meet Al Khaldiya at 7:35pm, with Lassad Al Chabbi's side looking to reclaim top spot.

Arsenal face defining Man City clash



Arsenal's Spanish manager Mikel Arteta (C) takes a team training session (file photo)

AFP | London

Mikel Arteta has urged spluttering Arsenal to embrace the "huge privilege" of facing Manchester City in a potentially decisive showdown in the Premier League title race.

Arteta's side are six points clear of second-placed City ahead of their blockbuster clash at the Etihad Stadium on Sunday.

But City have a game in hand on the Gunners and a victory for Pep Guardiola's men would tilt the balance of power in their favour heading into the final weeks of the season.

Adding to the drama of the do-or-die battle, Arsenal are enduring an untimely loss of form after losing three of their last five games in all competitions.

10

consecutive Premier League games have passed without an Arsenal victory at the Etihad Stadium

They were beaten by City in the League Cup final, suffered a shock FA Cup quarter-final exit at second-tier Southampton and slumped to a home league defeat against Bournemouth.

The Gunners were well below their best once again on Wednesday when they edged past Sporting Lisbon, drawing 0-0 to secure a 1-0 aggregate victory in the Champions League quarter-finals.

Renard sacked as Saudi Arabia coach ahead of World Cup



Herve Renard reacts during a match (file photo)

AFP | Paris

Frenchman Herve Renard said yesterday he has been relieved of his duties as Saudi Arabia coach, less than two months before the start of the 2026 World Cup.

Renard, 57, returned for a second spell as Saudi coach at the end of 2024, having led them at the last World Cup in Qatar, including to a famous win over eventual champions Argentina in the group stage.

"That's football... Saudi Arabia have qualified for the World Cup seven times, including twice with me," Renard told AFP via telephone.

"And there's only one coach who has led them through both the qualifiers and the World Cup; that's me, in 2022. At least there will be that sense of pride."

Renard, a two-time Africa Cup of Nations winner with Zambia and Ivory Coast, led Saudi Arabia from 2019 to 2023 before being replaced by Roberto Mancini.

He served as coach of the France women's team and reached the quarter-finals of both the 2023 Women's World Cup and 2024 Olympics.

Renard was later brought back by Saudi Arabia to succeed Mancini as the Italian left his role after an underwhelming 14-month stint.

Former Greece international Georgios Donis is reportedly being lined up as the man to take over from Renard.

A source close to the negotiations told AFP that talks are under way between the federation and Saudi club Al Khaleej, where Donis has been in charge since 2024.

Muharraq Finish Treble Run Over Manama

Hussain Maskati
TDT | Manama

Muharraq are champions again after an 89-81 overtime win over Manama in Game 4 of the 2025-26 Zain Bahrain Basketball League Finals last night, sealing a 3-1 series victory and completing a domestic treble. The treble includes the Bahrain Super Cup and the Khalifa bin Salman Cup, with all three titles coming at the expense of their rivals.

The addition of Deshawndre Washington from Shabab Al Ahli Dubai after an MVP season in the UAE proved pivotal for Peter Schomers' side. Arriving just a day before Game 4, he immediately stepped into the role of floor general, and his two-way impact helped steer the Red Wolves to their fifth championship.

Muharraq set the tone early in the series with narrow wins in Games 1 and 2 (74-73 and 88-80), taking control from the outset. Manama, coached by Salman Ramadhan and the record 25-time league champions, responded in Game 3 with an 89-83 win to extend the series.

Game 4 followed a familiar pattern, with Manama starting stronger before Muharraq gradually asserted control.

Manama opened well through new signing Donovan Smith, who provided immediate inte-



Muharraq players, officials, and fans celebrate with the league title at Khalifa Sports City

rior presence and efficient scoring. Alongside Ahmed Salman and Emran Hasan, he helped Manama move the ball effectively, while Muharraq stayed close through second-chance points despite early turnovers. Manama led 24-21 after the first quarter.

The second quarter remained closely contested. Smith continued to anchor the offense and finished with a game-high 31 points, consistently finishing inside. Muharraq responded through Nader Ali's perimeter shooting and improved execution, keeping the game within reach. At halftime, Manama held a narrow 35-34 lead.

The momentum shifted after the break. Washington took control for Muharraq, dictating tempo and attacking the rim to force defensive rotations. Muharraq became more organized at both ends and built a 67-59 lead by the end of the third quarter.

Manama fought back in the fourth. Alex Young increased his scoring aggression, Emran Hasan added key perimeter baskets, and Smith continued his inside production. Muharraq's turnovers under pressure allowed Manama to erase the deficit, and the game was tied 77-77 in the final minute, sending it to overtime.

In the extra period, the Red Wolves regained composure. Mohamed Nasser hit a crucial three-pointer to shift momentum, while Washington managed possessions with control and efficiency. Muharraq tightened defensively, limited second-chance opportunities, and pulled away to secure the 89-81 win and the championship.

Washington finished with 27 points, nine rebounds, and six assists, leading the decisive third-quarter surge and overtime control. Smith's 31 points led all scorers in defeat, but Muharraq once again delivered in key moments to secure another title.