

Hala hold nerves to secure Premier Division survival

TDT | Manama

Al Hala secured their place in next season's Zain Bahrain Basketball League premier division on Tuesday night, edging Sitra 96-86 in a tense, winner-takes-all third game of the relegation play-off at Khalifa Sports City.

The result capped a dramatic series: Hala took the first leg 107-102 last Friday, only for Sitra to respond with a 104-92 victory on Monday, setting the stage for the decisive clash. From the outset, Hala imposed themselves physically, taking a 22-17 lead after the first quarter. Despite this, Sitra's talisman Austin Ajukwa continued to shine, scoring 22 points in the first half alone, as Hala's defenders repeatedly double- and triple-teamed him to try to contain his threat.

Late in the second quarter, Ali Mohsen briefly gave Sitra the lead, but Elijah Alon Love Robinson, who had signed and arrived just hours before the game, calmly sank two free throws to give Hala a 45-44 advantage at halftime. His instant impact set the tone for Hala's composed performance in the second half.

After the restart, Sitra surged into a six-point lead midway through the third quarter, following a Mohsen three-pointer. Yet Hala steadily wrested control back, with Ahmed Binda-neh's fast-break lay-up opening a 72-65 advantage. Sitra fought back to narrow the gap to two points heading into the final period, keeping the decider finely balanced.

In the fourth quarter, Binda-



Al Hala's Abdulqader Thani in action during play-off decider against Sitra

neh delivered nine of his 20 points, including a five-point burst that restored Hala's lead. Elijah Love remained instrumental, while a contested three-pointer with just over two minutes remaining effectively sealed the game. Love finished

with 32 points, Abdulqader Thani added 25, Binda-neh contributed 20, and Nader Shaker chipped in 12 off the bench.

For Sitra, Ajukwa ended with 38 points on 10-of-29 shooting, while Mohsen and Dhaif Husain Dhaif added 19 and 15 points,

respectively. Ultimately, Hala's defensive discipline and timely scoring under pressure proved decisive, confirming their return to the premier division for 2026-27, while Sitra will remain in the second tier next season.

Bahrain Club clinches 25th Table Tennis League crown



Bahrain Club celebrates title win after victory over Saar

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Bahrain Club secured the Bahrain Table Tennis League title for the 2025-2026 season, marking the 25th championship in its distinguished history. The title was sealed after a hard-fought 3-1 victory over traditional rivals Saar Club in a match that lasted more than two and a half hours.

Saar delivered a vastly improved performance compared to their 3-0 loss in the first round. Defying expectations, they introduced a different lineup, with Mohammed Nader Al Ali replacing experienced player Sayed Ali Radhi. Ali Abbas Abdulwahab was retained and opened the match against Rashid Sanad, an unusual move as captain Muradha

Hussein typically starts.

Bahrain appeared on course for another straight 3-0 win. Rashid Sanad defeated Ali Abbas Abdulwahab, followed by Mohammed Abbas beating Muradha Hussein. Hassan Abdulrahim then came close to sealing the match, leading 2-0 and 8-5, but Al Ali produced a remarkable comeback to win 3-2 in the standout contest.

The decisive clash came between Rashid Sanad and Muradha Hussein, where Bahrain's captain secured a 3-1 victory, with set scores of 11-6, 10-12, 11-7 and 11-3.

The Bahrain Table Tennis Federation has postponed the trophy ceremony due to the national team's preparations for the upcoming World Cup in London, including participation in an international tournament in Tunisia.

BFA cancels youth competitions amid Gulf tensions

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The Bahrain Football Association (BFA) has officially canceled all remaining youth competitions for the 2025-2026 season, in agreement with member clubs, due to the ongoing conflict in the Gulf and related safety concerns.

The decision follows Civil Defense Council directives prohibiting large gatherings and reflects strict adherence to precautionary measures. The

federation emphasized that protecting the health and safety of players, staff, and the broader sporting community is the top priority.

Bahrain Football Association
الاتحاد البحريني لكرة القدم

The BFA also cited logistical challenges, including difficulties gathering players for daily training, limited time for match preparation, and obstacles in organizing games in the usual format.

The federation expressed appreciation for the clubs' cooperation and understanding, stressing that this step balances public safety with the continued development of youth football, ensuring the well-being of all participants during this period of uncertainty.

Bahrain Beach Handball Set for Sanya

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Bahrain's national beach handball team will compete in Group A at the 6th Asian Beach Games, set to take place in Sanya, China, from April 22 to 30, 2026. The Games will feature 14 sports across 15 disciplines, combining traditional beach competitions with emerging and urban-style activities. Among the sports are aquatics, beach athletics, 3x3 basketball, beach soccer, beach handball, beach kabaddi, dragon boat racing, ju-jitsu, sailing, sport climbing, teqball, triath-

lon, beach volleyball, and beach wrestling.

In men's beach handball,



Group A includes Bahrain, hosts China, Iran, the Philippines, Hong Kong, India, and Sri Lanka. Group B features Thailand, Oman, Pakistan, Jordan, Maldives, Bangladesh, Qatar, and Mongolia. Both groups are expected to be highly competitive, with each match critical for qualification to the knockout stage.

The championship offers Bahrain a key opportunity to demonstrate the growth of its beach handball program while competing against Asia's leading teams in a major continental event.

Fernandez uncertain over Chelsea future after Champions League exit

AFP | London

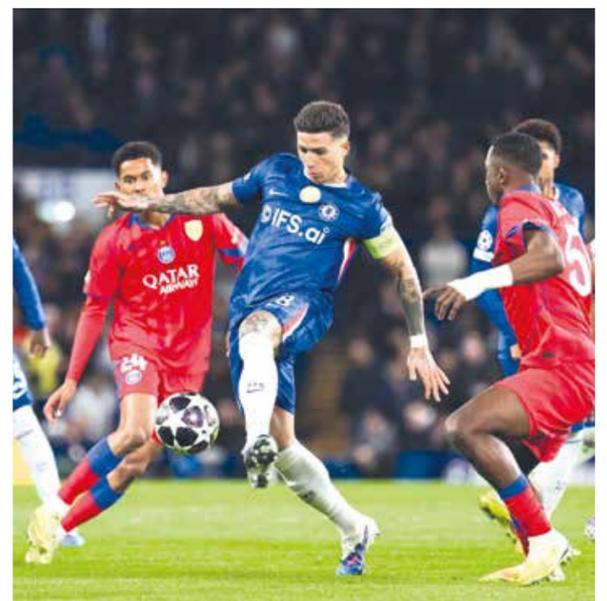
Enzo Fernandez has suggested he could leave Chelsea at the end of the current season after the London club were knocked out of the Champions League.

With world club champions Chelsea currently sixth in the Premier League, they may yet fail to qualify for a place among European football's elite next term.

Argentina's Fernandez captained the Blues against PSG on Tuesday in the absence of the injured Reece James.

But the 25-year-old midfielder did little to end speculation he could be on his way out of Stamford Bridge, telling ESPN: "I don't know, there are eight games left and the FA Cup. There's the World Cup and then we'll see."

Fernandez, reflecting on Chelsea's latest loss to PSG, who put the tie to bed with two goals in the first 15 minutes at Stamford Bridge, added: "I think we failed to control the game. In the first leg, we lost focus in the final 15 minutes and conceded three goals, and here it happened at the very start.



Chelsea's Argentinian midfielder #08 Enzo Fernandez (C) fights for the ball

"At this level, you can't concede two goals so quickly because of small details. Ultimately, over the two legs, PSG were the better side and deserve to go through. Since I arrived at Chelsea we have already passed through similar situations and we were able to turn them

around. Now, our focus must be on winning the FA Cup and achieving our goal of qualifying for next season's Champions League."

Eight-time FA Cup-winners Chelsea face third-tier Port Vale in the quarter-finals on April 4.