

Bahrain to wrap up medal hunt in Arab athletics



Bahrain official Faten Abdulnabi, right, receives the women's 800m bronze medal during the podium ceremony yesterday on behalf of Manal Al Bahrawi

● **Six Bahraini athletes are set to go for gold in four races, including men's and women's half-marathons, men's 5,000m and women's 1,500m**

TD | Manama

Bahrain's medal hunt in the 22nd Arab Athletics Championships concludes today in Tunisia with three final chances to add to their overall tally.

Set to go for gold are Al Siddique Mikho and Zuhair Awad in the men's 5,000m; Tigist Gashaw and Manal Al Bahrawi in the women's 1,500m; and Tejitu Daba Chalchissa and Josha Limoshin in the women's and men's half-marathons, respectively.

Mikho will be looking to add to his men's 1,500m gold medal which he captured on Thursday, while Tigist will be hoping to double her winnings after already taking the silver in the women's 5,000m.

Manal, meanwhile, has also already won a medal—a bronze

in the women's 800m race. Manal completed the event in third place, but was later promoted to second. Yesterday, however, she was given her original classification, according to the Bahrain Athletics Association.

Heading into today's last day of competition, Bahrain already have a six-medal haul. Abdelrahman Mahmoud in the men's shot put and Dawit Fikadu in the men's 10,000m join Mikho as the gold-medallists. Tigist and Abdunasser Almy, also in the men's 10,000m, are the silver-medallists, while Manal won Bahrain's lone bronze so far.

A total of 20 countries are taking part in the championship, including Bahrain, Lebanon, Algeria, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Oman, Iraq, Palestine, Yemen, Morocco, Jordan, Syria, Sudan, Qatar, Libya, Djibouti, Somalia, Comoros and hosts Tunisia.

Bahrain were the overall champions in the previous Arab championship held in Egypt in 2019. They clinched a total of 24 medals then, including 15 gold, five silver and four bronze.

Verstappen pips Hamilton for French Grand Prix pole

Max Verstappen beats title rival Lewis Hamilton to pole in thrilling French GP qualifying

● **Max Verstappen leads reigning world champion Lewis Hamilton by four points in the drivers' standings**

AFP | Paris

Max Verstappen claimed pole yesterday for the French Grand Prix with Lewis Hamilton's Mercedes alongside the Red Bull driver on the front row to lay the foundations for another gripping instalment in this season's delicately-poised title battle.

Valtteri Bottas in the other Mercedes starts on the second row with Verstappen's teammate Sergio Perez.

Verstappen leads Hamilton by just four points in the Formula One world championship ahead of the seventh race of the season at the Circuit Paul Ricard on Sunday.

Hamilton won from pole the last two races staged at Le Castellet in 2018 and 2019, but Verstappen had approached qualifying as the man to beat after dominating the final two practice sessions.

Verstappen, claiming his first pole since the season-opener in Bahrain, is anxious to translate pole into a win after a shredded tyre robbed him of almost cer-



Red Bull's Dutch driver Max Verstappen gives a thumbs up in the parc ferme

tain victory in Baku last time out.

"So far it's been a really positive weekend, on a track that is normally difficult for us. To get pole position was really nice.

"Great day for us but we have to finish it off tomorrow and get 25 points -- which we lost in Baku. Great promise from our side."

After struggling to keep tabs with his Red Bull rival in practice Hamilton was relieved to narrow the gap between them to 0.258s.

"We'll keep pushing, keep fighting and giving it everything. Their long-run pace is a tenth or two quicker than us, but the car's in a much different place now," said the seven-time world

champion.

"We're going to fight for a chance into turn one and there could be some interesting strategy tomorrow, and I think there could be some rain tomorrow, so a chance to see a rain master," he added.

Carlos Sainz for Ferrari posted the fifth quickest time in qualifying to seal a third row spot with Pierre Gasly's Alpha Tauri joining him.

Then came Sainz's teammate Charles Leclerc and McLaren's Lando Norris with Fernando Alonso (Alpine) and Daniel Ricciardo (McLaren) completing the top 10.

'It's awesome'

With qualifying watched by a

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MAX VERSTAPPEN

15,000-strong crowd allowed in after the easing of coronavirus restrictions, Q1 was only four minutes old when it was red-flagged after Japanese rookie Yuki Tsunoda lost control of his Alpha Tauri coming out of turn one, his car pirouetting gracefully into the safety barrier.

This was the fourth time out of seven Tsunoda has failed to progress to Q2.

With 22 seconds left of Q1 Mick Schumacher's Haas crashed into a barrier, cruel luck for the German after making it into Q2 for the very first time in his fledgling F1 career but unable to take part with his car requiring repairs.

Verstappen topped Q1 with Hamilton, Perez and Bottas closest.

The Mercedes duo rose to the top of the times in Q2, with Bottas edging Hamilton who was much punchier than he had been in practice. Perez and Verstappen were next, setting up an intriguing Q3 skirmish for the Provencal pole.

Ahli lose to Kuwait Club in GCC basketball

● **Ahli give up 17-6 run to opponents in final three-and-a-half minutes of overtime to suffer 108-117 loss**

● **Maitham Jameel makes three-point play with 17.8 seconds left in regulation to force extra session tied at 96-all**

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Bahrain's Al Ahli were dealt a tough 108-117 loss in overtime to Kuwait Club yesterday, in their second game of the FIBA Asia Champions Cup Gulf Basketball Association Qualifier, being held in Dubai.

The national champions gave up a 17-6 run to their rivals in the final three-and-a-half minutes of the contest, and that proved to be the difference.

Earlier, Ahli were able to force the extra session after Maitham Jameel tied the game at 96-all with a three-point play on a driving lay-up and just 17.8 seconds to go, during which he was fouled. He made the ensuing free-throw to set the stage for the additional five minutes.

But after American profes-



Al Ahli's Mike Harris looks to post up against Kuwait's Ali Alhadhoud during their game yesterday

sional Manny Harris buried a three-pointer to put Ahli ahead 102-100, it was all downhill from there and Kuwait took advantage.

Harris finished as Ahli's leading scorer in the loss, pouring in 46 points including six triples. Fellow-American Mike Harris added 28 points, 15 rebounds and four blocks but fouled out in overtime.

Mohammed Qurban chipped in with 12 off the bench, while Hesham Sarhan scored 11 and Jameel had 10.

The result was Ahli's first loss of the competition, after their

opening night win against Al Shamal of Qatar on Friday.

The event, which also acts as the 40th GCC Clubs Basketball Championship, continues today with Ahli back in action on the hardwood.

The Bahrainis face off with tournament hosts Shabab Al Ahli of the UAE in their third successive game in three days. It will be Ahli's penultimate game of the first round. They then take on Al Nasser of Saudi Arabia on Tuesday. The semi-finals are scheduled to be held on Friday, followed by the final the next night.

Al Najma to play for Asian clubs handball bronze

● **Bahraini champions bow out of title contention after losing 22-30 to Al Duhail of Qatar in semi-finals**

● **Najma are now set for re-match with Al Arabi, also of Qatar, in the game for third place, scheduled for tomorrow**

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Al Najma bowed out of title contention in the 23rd Asian Men's Club Handball League Championship last night after losing 22-30 to Al Duhail SC of Qatar in their semi-final match.

Duhail took control of the contest early and never wavered against the Bahraini champions.

Najma trailed 11-15 at half-time, and stayed within striking distance for much of the final 30-minute period. They trailed by just four goals, 21-25, with under eight minutes remaining but then the Qataris ended the game scoring five of the last six goals for a strong finish.

Mohammed Habib was the top scorer for Najma in the



Al Najma's Hassan Alfardan battles hard against his Duhail marker during their semi-final match last night

loss. He had six goals. Mohamed Mohamed and Kumail Mahoodh each chipped in with four, while Ali Eid and Bilal Askani contributed three goals apiece. Khaled Mohammed and Mohamed Ahmed were the two other players to make it onto the score sheet with a goal each.

For Duhail, Alaya Khaled had seven goals while Angel Hernandez had six and Rafael Capote five.

The result left Najma with a chance to compete for the tournament's bronze medals. They

will be taking on Al Arabi SC, also of Qatar, in the match for third place. Duhail, on the other hand, face off with Al Kuwait SC of Kuwait for the gold medals, after Kuwait edged past Arabi 23-22 in yesterday's other final four affair.

Both gold and bronze medal contests are scheduled for tomorrow.

The meeting between Najma and Arabi is a re-match of their first round encounter, which the Bahrainis narrowly lost 25-27.