

Bahrain bow to Japan

Bahrain face first defeat in Asian Men's Handball Championship against Japan

TDT | Manama

Bahrain suffered a disheartening 23-25 loss to Japan yesterday in the 2020 Asian Men's Handball Championship being held in Kuwait.

The defeat was their first setback in the competition and their first loss from two games in Group One of the ongoing Main Round.

The result puts their semi-final hopes in jeopardy, as they now must win their final fixture of this stage to have any chance of advancing.

The Japanese inched one step closer to securing their berth in the semi-finals.

The takers of the two available spots will be confirmed tomorrow when Bahrain take on Saudi Arabia and Japan face the UAE.

The Emiratis claimed a 23-20 win over Saudi yesterday in the other divisional fixture to keep their semis hopes alive.

Japan's clash with the UAE is scheduled for 2pm at Shaikh Saad Al Abdullah Sports Hall Complex in Kuwait City, to be followed at the same venue by Bahrain facing Saudi at 4pm, Bahrain time.

Wins for Bahrain and Japan would send them both through, but other results would complicate matters and create ties on points in the group standings.

Any tie-breaks will first be decided by points, then head-to-head points, then head-to-head



Bahrain's Ali Mirza tries to power through his Japanese defender during their match yesterday

Standings Group One

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Japan	2	2	0	0	55	45	4
Bahrain	2	1	0	1	52	43	2
UAE	2	1	0	1	41	49	2
Saudi Arabia	2	0	0	2	42	53	0

goal difference, head-to-head number of goals scored and finally by goal difference.

In Bahrain's loss yesterday, the nationals held a slim 11-10 lead at the half but their rivals stepped it up in the final 30-minute period.

The Japanese made the most of their opportunities and managed to stave off the Bahrain attack, enough to claim the narrow two-goal victory.

Bahrain captain Hussain Al Sayyad scored four goals to lead his team in the loss. Ali Mirza,

Ahmed Fadul, Ahmed Almaqabi and Mahdi Saad all added three goals each, while scoring twice were Ali Eid and Mohammed Mirza. Rounding out the scorers with a goal apiece were Mohammed Abdulredha, Bilal Askani and Mohammed Habib.

For Japan, Yuto Agarie was their leading scorer with eight goals. Tatsuki Yoshino chipped in with six, while Shinnosuke Tokuda had three.

Qualifying for the semi-finals will also earn the team a place at next year's World Men's

Solskjaer rejects Neville criticism as Rashford begins recovery

AFP | London

Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer has contradicted former team-mate Gary Neville by saying on Tuesday United are on the "right track".

Outspoken TV pundit Neville had said in a podcast after United's 2-0 defeat at leaders Liverpool on Sunday, which left the Red Devils 30 points behind their rivals in the Premier League, the club was in a mess.

The former United captain pinned much of the blame for the team's current problems on the recruitment undertaken by chief executive Ed Woodward.

But with United still fifth in the league and competing in three cup competitions, Solskjaer believes it is not the right time to start a blame game.

"We've just lost to Liverpool, who you all say are fantastic and we have been in the game until the last kick of the ball," he said at his press conference on the eve of United's Premier League game with Burnley on Wednesday.

"For me, that is strides forward.

"The signs are there that we're on the right track, definitely.

Nadal in the pink as Sharapova hits all-time low at Australian Open

AFP | Melbourne

Top seed Rafael Nadal turned on the style as he launched his bid for a record-equalling 20th Major title at the Australian Open on Tuesday, but falling star Maria Sharapova hit a career low.

Australia's Nick Kyrgios also cantered into the second round, but fourth seed Daniil Medvedev had to fight his way past American Frances Tiafoe in four sets.

Nadal, one shy of Roger Federer's Grand Slam mark, dropped only five games as he swatted aside Bolivia's Hugo Dellien 6-2, 6-3, 6-0 in just over two hours at a sunny Rod Laver Arena.

"It was a positive start," said the reigning Roland Garros and US Open champion, wearing a bright pink singlet and matching trainers.

"What you want in the first round is just to win, and it's better if it's in straight sets."

He joins Federer and defending champion Novak Djokovic in round two as the Big Three look to tighten a stranglehold that has brought them all but one of the last 14 Australian Open titles.

Nadal, the first player to be world number one in three different decades, is still thriving at 33 but it's a different story for five-time Grand Slam winner Sharapova.

The 32-year-old, playing on a wildcard as she wrestles with



Rafael Nadal hits a return

a shoulder injury, lost 6-3, 6-4 to Croatia 19th seed Donna Vekic, making her an opening-round loser at three straight Grand Slams for the first time.

The future looks uncertain for the former world number one, who won Wimbledon when she was just 17 but has not reached a Grand Slam final since she lifted the 2014 French Open trophy.

"I can speak about my struggles and the things that I've gone through with my shoulder, but it's not really in my character to," Sharapova said.

"I was there, I put myself out there (playing). As tough as it was, I finished the match -- it wasn't the way that I wanted."

Britain's Johanna Konta, a two-time Slam semi-finalist, also fell at the first hurdle as she battles to overcome a knee problem, losing 4-6, 2-6 to unseeded Tunisian Ons Jabeur.

On a bumper day of 88 first-

round matches, after rain wiped out half of Monday's schedule, former US Open champion Marin Cilic and Milos Raonic both moved safely through.

Italy's Fabio Fognini, two sets down against America's Reilly Opelka when their match was suspended on Monday, returned to win it in five after a stormy encounter when both players argued furiously with the umpire.

A new star emerged in 18-year-old Italian Jannik Sinner, last year's NextGen champion, who earned his first Grand Slam victory against Australia's Max Purcell.

Australia's Kyrgios, who has spearheaded fundraising efforts for the country's deadly bushfire disaster, kept his notorious temper in check despite being taken to two tie-breaks in a 6-2, 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (7-1) win over Lorenzo Sonego of Italy.



Athletes in action during the event

Slovenia debut for BRAVE CF deemed a "massive success"

TDT | Manama

BRAVE Combat Federation, founded in 2016 by His Highness Shaikh Khaled bin Hamad Al Khalifa, has visited last week its 19th country in less than four years of operations. Ljubljana, Slovenia was chosen for BRAVE CF 34, which marked another step towards world domination for the biggest-ever Bahraini brand.

After hosting shows in some of the biggest countries in the world and taking the flag of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the highest of places in the sporting world, BRAVE Combat Federation's first show in the Balkans was deemed a massive success by the local press.

In partnership with WFC, BRAVE CF has been able to empower the local MMA scene by giving the local athletes international exposure as well as bringing top global talent to the country for the first time.

BRAVE CF 34/WFC 24 had athletes from France, Brazil, United States, Russia, Croatia, Bosnia, among others and showed once again the international reach of the fastest-growing MMA promotion in the world, born in the Kingdom of Bahrain and empowering the MMA scene across the globe.

All of these points have been highlighted in Slovenia, where

everyone involved with the sport has appreciated the impact that BRAVE CF has had in the local scene for the country.

BRAVE Combat Federation will continue its world tour as it takes the Kingdom's name to Brazil and Sweden next.

BRAVE CF 34/WFC 24 full results:

Heavyweight (For WFC Championship): Luka Podkrajsek def. Viktor Vasic via split decision (29-28, 28-29, 29-28)

Welterweight: Benoit St. Denis def. Ivica Trusek by submission (kneebar) - Round 1

Light Heavyweight: Jakob Nedoh def. Zarko Sedoglavic via KO (punches) - Round 1

Middleweight: Phil Hawes def. Iuri Fraga via TKO (punches) - Round 1

Flyweight: Zach Makovsky def. Velimurad Alkhasov via split decision (30-27, 27-30, 29-28)

Lightweight: Mochamed Machaev def. Matjaz Vicar via unanimous decision (30-26, 30-25, 30-25)

Catchweight (53 kg): Monika Kucinic def. Jennifer Trioreau by unanimous decision (30-23, 30-27, 30-25)

Welterweight: Bojan Kosednar def. Tonci Perusko via TKO (punches) - Round 1

Light Heavyweight: Marko Drmonjic def. Matej Plavec via TKO (leg-kicks) - Round 2

Shaikh Khalid approves date for Strongest Bahraini Man



A participant in action during the previous edition of the event

TDT | Manama

HH Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa, First Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports and President of Bahrain Olympic Committee has approved the official date of the 3rd Strongest Bahraini Man Championship which will take place on February 8, 2020.

To be held under the patronage of HH Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the event will be organised by HH Media Office under the theme #be_a_beast at the area opposite to the Avenues Mall. The competition is part of HH Shaikh Khalid's sport initiatives and will cover the light, middle and heavy weights. The

contest will stand as the qualifying round for the #strongest_GCC_man which will be organised in April this year at Bahrain International Circuit.

"We have approved the organisation of the third edition of the event as part of our belief in the importance of supporting the Bahraini youth and sports in the Kingdom. We want to discover young and interesting talents as we look forward to forming international teams who are capable of fighting for top honours," HH Shaikh Khalid said.

He further added: "The first and second editions attracted strong participation and earned superb reputation, making both events a huge success."