

Abdullah, Nasser win mini tennis titles

TDT | Manama

Abdullah Khalfan and Nasser Mohammed both triumphed yesterday in their respective categories in a mini tennis festival, held as part of the ninth EK Kanoo Juniors Open Tennis Championship at Bahrain Tennis Club (BTC) in Juffair.

Abdullah won the open under 6 and 8 age category, while Nasser claimed the open under 9 and 10.

Abdullah won his title after narrowly defeating Isa Abbas in the final 4-3. Nasser followed suit with a 6-2 win over Ali Al Khayyat in their final.

A total of 56 young players participated in the festival, which was held at the BTC's mini courts with red and green tennis balls used during play.

The matches were attend-



Abdullah Khalfan in action during yesterday's play

ed by BTC president Khalis Al Muqla, who will also be on hand at the tournament's closing ceremony on Wednesday, where he will distribute the trophies and medals to the winners and all those who participated.

The championship is being held under the patronage of Ebrahim K Kanoo vice-chairman Fuad Ebrahim Kanoo.

Champion Osaka crashes out to big-hitting American Anisimova

AFP | Melbourne

American Amanda Anisimova, ranked 60th in the world, saved two matchpoints and smashed winners at will to beat reigning champion Naomi Osaka 4-6 6-3 7-6 (10-5) in the third round of the Australian Open yesterday.

Anisimova produced a superb display to knock out the Japanese and disappoint those who had been salivating at the prospect of a fourth-round showdown between the four-times major winner and Australian world number one Ashleigh Barty.

"I just want to soak in this moment," Anisimova told reporters. "I'm just extremely happy. It was an amazing



Naomi Osaka walks from the court following her third round loss

match. It was very close.

"It sucks we couldn't both win today, because these matches are hard. Honestly, I think she's a very nice girl. These days are kind of tough."

Osaka, who has won all her major titles on hardcourts, had two opportunities to close out the match in the 10th game of the deciding set.

Sousa names 23-player squad for local training

Bahrain's senior men's national team to kick off latest training gathering tonight in preparation for upcoming competitions, including qualifying for the AFC Asian Cup 2023

● **Ali Madan, Abdulla Hazza called up from overseas clubs**

● **Players from Riffa, Muharraq, Al Khaldiya, Manama, East Riffa and Hidd make up rest of team**

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Bahrain head coach Helio Sousa

Bahrain head coach Helio Sousa has called up a 23-member squad for their latest training gathering, which kicks off this evening.

The nationals are set to play two international friendlies during this period of practices, which is scheduled to conclude on February 1. The Kingdom's senior men's squad are set to face off with top opposition from Africa, first against Uganda on Thursday before facing DR Congo on the last day of their camp.

The Bahrainis are using the friendlies as part of their preparations for their upcoming competitions, which include the third round of qualification for the AFC Asian Cup 2023, which will be held in June.

Sousa has named two of Bahrain's overseas professional players onto the squad, namely Ali Madan who plays for Al Urooba in the UAE and Abdulla

Hazaa who plies his trade with Al Tadhamon in Kuwait.

There are also seven players from back-to-back national champions Riffa, five from AFC Cup champs Muharraq, four from Al Khaldiya, three from Manama, and one apiece from East Riffa and Hidd.

A number of Bahrain's top international stars are on the team, including Komail Alaswad, Mohammed Jassim Marhoon, Jassim Al Shaikh, Hashem Sayed Isa, Sayed Redha Isa, Abdulwahab Al Malood, Waleed Al Hayam, Mahdi Humaidan, Mohammed Hardan and Sayed Mohammed Jaafar.

The rest of the team includes Hamad Shamsan, Hazza Ali, Amine Hasan, Hasan Karrani, Ammar Abbas, Mahdi Abduljabbar, Ebrahim Khattal, Jassim Khulaif, Abdulrahman Salem, Sayed Shubbar Alawi and Mohamed Adel.

Both of Bahrain's friendly



Nationals set to play two international friendlies during this training period, first against Uganda on Thursday before facing DR Congo on February 1

matches over the next fortnight will be played at home. Their opponents are both classified higher on the FIFA World Rankings, with Uganda currently 82nd and DR Congo 64th. Bahrain are currently 91st.

The nationals have yet to learn of their groupings for this stage of qualification. The draw

is scheduled to be held on February 24.

Matches will be played over three days in June, including on the 8th, 11th and 14th. It was announced by the AFC that each group will hold their games in a centralised venue, and a bidding process will be held for the hosts.

Bahrain are one of 24 national teams competing in this third round of qualifying for the AFC Asian Cup 2023. These teams are to be divided into six groups of four to play a single round-robin. The group winners and the best five runners-up across all groups will qualify for the Asian Cup, where they are joined by China and by the 12 teams which qualified directly from the second round.

Bahrain have appeared in the Asian Cup, the continent's premier football competition, six times in the past, including the last five editions. Their best finish was fourth in 2004.

Bahrain squad

Riffa: Hamad Shamsan, Hashem Sayed Isa, Hazza Ali, Jassim Al Shaikh, Komail Alaswad, Mohammed Jassim Marhoon, Sayed Redha Isa

Muharraq: Abdulwahab Al Malood, Amine Hasan, Hasan Karrani, Waleed Al Hayam, Sayed Mohammed Jaafar

Al Khaldiya: Sayed Shubbar Alawi, Mahdi Humaidan, Mohamed Adel, Mohammed Hardan

Manama: Ammar Abbas, Mahdi Abduljabbar, Ebrahim Khattal

East Riffa: Jassim Khulaif

Hidd: Abdulrahman Salem

Al Urooba (UAE): Ali Madan

Al Tadhamon (Kuwait): Abdulla Hazza

Riffa, East Riffa victorious in football league

● **Mohammed Jassim Marhoon fires in first-half winner for Riffa against Budaiya**

● **Obus Prince Aggreh, Sami Al Hossaini both on target for East Riffa against Hidd**

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Riffa and East Riffa were both victorious last night in their week 10 matches of the 2021/2022 Nasser bin Hamad Bahrain Premier Football League.

Riffa, the defending back-to-back champions, defeated last-placed Budaiya 1-0, while East Riffa enjoyed a 2-0 win against Hidd.

Mohammed Jassim Marhoon scored the winning goal for Riffa in their match against Budaiya.

The influential national team midfielder headed home from close range in the 43rd minute off a cross from the right corner supplied by fellow-international Komail Alaswad.

With the result, Riffa continued their unbeaten run with



East Riffa's Obus Prince Aggreh, right battles for possession with Hidd's Abdulla Ali Hassan

Standings

| | P | W | D | L | GD | Pts |
|-------------|----|---|---|---|-----|-----|
| Riffa | 10 | 8 | 2 | 0 | 15 | 26 |
| Al Khaldiya | 10 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 7 | 18 |
| Manama | 9 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 6 | 18 |
| East Riffa | 10 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 18 |
| Muharraq | 10 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 14 |
| Al Hala | 9 | 2 | 3 | 4 | -5 | 9 |
| Al Ahli | 10 | 1 | 6 | 3 | -6 | 9 |
| Hidd | 10 | 1 | 5 | 4 | -5 | 8 |
| Al Najma | 10 | 1 | 3 | 6 | -10 | 6 |
| Budaiya | 10 | 1 | 2 | 7 | -10 | 5 |

their eighth win in 10 matches. They improved to 26 points as they stretched their lead atop

the league standings. Budaiya remained in last place on five points following their seventh

loss.

Meanwhile, Aggreh and Al Hossaini scored on either side of half-time for East Riffa.

They opened their account early on when Aggreh headed home right in front of goal off a headed pass by teammate Aguinaldo Policarpo. That was enough to send East Riffa into the break with the lead.

They then all but sealed the win in the 68th minute, when Al Hossaini fired in a powerful left-footed shot from inside the box. Al Hossaini did well to set himself up on the right of the penalty area, and he made no mistake with his effort, which he sent into the top-right corner of the net.

East Riffa improved to 15 points with their fifth win. Hidd were dealt their fourth defeat and stayed on eight points in the bottom half of the table.

Meanwhile, Al Ahli stunned Al Najma 2-1 in another match. On target for the victors were Artem Serdyuk and Nozim Babadzhanov, while Salem Adel scored for Najma.

Ahli won their first game of the season after 10 tries and they improved to nine points on the league standings. Najma suffered their sixth loss and stayed on six points.

Nadal repels Khachanov to reach last-16 in Melbourne

Reuters | Melbourne

Sixth seed Rafa Nadal dropped his first set at this year's Australian Open but still powered through to the fourth round with a 6-3 6-2 3-6 6-1 defeat of Karen Khachanov yesterday.

The Spaniard, seeking to claim a record 21st Grand Slam title in the absence of great rivals Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic, was sen-

sational as he took a two-set lead.

But Khachanov, seeded 28th, threw caution to the wind in the third set, stalling Nadal's charge with some ferocious hitting.

Olympic runner-up Khachanov had lost all seven previous meetings with 2009 Australian Open champion Nadal but briefly looked capable of mounting a comeback.

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