

## Bahrain's Abdo finishes second in Houston Marathon



Bahrain's Abdi Ibrahim Abdo celebrates after crossing second the finish line of the 24th edition of Rome Marathon, on April 8, 2018 in Rome (file photo)

● **Bahraini elite athlete narrowly misses out on impressive victory after leading from race start before going off course momentarily**

TDI | Manama

Bahraini elite athlete Abdi Ibrahim Abdo finished a close runner-up in the men's race of the Houston Marathon, held in the US.

Abdo completed the 42-kilometre race distance in two hours 11 minutes 11 seconds, just eight seconds behind winner James Ngandu of Kenya.

It was a tough result for Abdo, who was leading from the start. But he went off the course momentarily after following the timing car by mistake, costing him the victory.

Elisha Kiprop Barno, also of Kenya, came third in 2:11:16, while Kenta Uchida of Japan came fourth in 2:11:19.

Kelkile Gezahegn of Ethiopia, Frank Lara of the US, Luke Caldwell of Great Britain and Josh Izewski, also from the U.S., completed the men's top eight.

Abdo was competing in his first marathon of the season. The 24-year-old currently boasts a personal best of 2:08:32 in the distance—a time he set in 2018 in Rome.

## Bahrain national team kick off training gathering



Bahrain head coach Jelio Sousa, right, and assistant coach Jose Alexandre Carneiro during training

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Bahrain's senior men's national football team kicked off their latest local training period yesterday under chilly conditions.

The session was held at the Al Ahli Club stadium in Zinj.

The nationals are getting set to play two international friendlies during this coming fortnight, first against Uganda on Thursday before facing DR Congo on February 1. The

tune-up games are part of their preparations for their upcoming competitions, particularly the start of the third round of qualification for the AFC Asian Cup 2023, which will be held in June.

Head coach Helio Sousa has named a 23-player squad for training. The roster includes Hamad Shamsan, Hashem Sayed Isa, Hazza Ali, Jassim Al Shaikh, Komail Alaswad, Mohammed Jassim Marhoon, Sayed Redha Isa, Abdulwahab Al Malood, Amine Hasan, Hasan Karrani,



Bahrain's Jassim Khulaif dribbles the ball during drills yesterday 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.

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.

# Medvedev, Tsitsipas march into last 16 as Halep fires warning

Clinical Daniil Medvedev cruises into Australian Open fourth round after beating Botic van de Zandschulp

● **Stefanos Tsitsipas beats Benoit Paire**

● **Ashleigh Barty braces for Amanda Anisimova test**

AFP | Melbourne

World number two and title favourite Daniil Medvedev won over the Australian Open crowd yesterday as the Russian "villain" eased into the last 16 along with Stefanos Tsitsipas.

After the drama of Friday, when defending champion Naomi Osaka exited Melbourne in the third round, the leading women's seeds were also mostly untroubled on day six.

Second seed Aryna Sabalenka overcame some of her serving yips and Simona Halep was an emphatic winner, the former number one now playing self-described "dinosaur" Alize Cornet on Monday for a place in the quarter-finals.

Medvedev, the de facto men's top seed after the deportation of defending champion Novak Djokovic on the eve of the Grand Slam, said some fans at Melbourne Park had a "low IQ" after they booed him in his second-round victory over Australian showman Nick Kyrgios.

The reigning US Open champion needed four sets and a large dose of composure to see off Kyrgios and silence Rod Laver Arena, and was branded a "villain" by local media for the way



Daniil Medvedev in action during his match

“I'll put it this way, it's easier to play a guy from the Netherlands than a guy from Australia in Australia in Melbourne

DANIIL MEDVEDEV

he riled up the crowd.

But it was altogether more comfortable as he dismissed unseeded Dutchman Botic van de Zandschulp and he won some friends in the process.

The 25-year-old Medvedev kept his cool in sweltering conditions on Margaret Court Arena to roll through 6-4, 6-4, 6-2 in 1hr 55min and faces American Maxime Cressy in the fourth round.

"I'll put it this way, it's easier to play a guy from the Netherlands than a guy from Austral-

ia in Australia in Melbourne," said Medvedev, who has a similar love-hate dynamic with the crowd in New York.

"Every good relationship must have its ups and downs so I think it's good, it's entertaining and it's real, there is some relationship going on."

Greek fourth seed Tsitsipas, who is chasing a maiden major, was also largely untroubled in a 6-3, 7-5, 6-7 (2/7), 6-4 win over unseeded Frenchman Benoit Paire and plays American Taylor Fritz next.

Tsitsipas's serve was the foundation. He did not drop a service game despite losing a set and sent down 21 aces.

Medvedev and Tsitsipas, two of the generation coming up fast behind the "Big Three" of Djokovic, Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer, could meet in the semi-finals.

There was defeat however for Andrey Rublev, the Russian fifth seed, who lost in four sets to

**YOU KNOW WHAT**

After missing Wimbledon and the French Open in an injury-plagued 2021, Halep is now back to peak fitness and has notched eight straight wins, including a warm-up title in Melbourne



Simona Halep in action during her match

Emma Raducanu -- 6-2, 6-1 in just 64 minutes to set up a date with Cornet of France.

The fit-again Halep came into the tournament full of confidence after her first title in 16 months earlier this month at a Melbourne warm-up event and was always in charge.

The 14th seed next meets unseeded Cornet, who celebrated her 32nd birthday by slugging



Ashleigh Barty

it out with Slovenian 29th seed Tamara Zidansek for a 4-6, 6-4, 6-2 victory.

The crowd serenaded her by singing happy birthday.

"It's definitely a very, very special victory being back in the second week 13 years after my first (time). It's quite special," she said.

"The day of my birthday, I mean, what else can I ask for?"

World number two Sabalenka overcame some of the serving problems that have been plaguing her early season, but still totted up 10 double faults and needed three sets to get past 31st seed Marketa Vondrousova.

The Belarusian now meets unseeded Estonian veteran Kaia Kanepi.

Also safely into round four and looking ominous is seventh seed Iga Swiatek, who swatted aside 25th seed Daria Kasatkina, 6-2, 6-3, but 10th seed Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova was a surprise loser to unseeded Sorana Cirstea.

**'What else can I ask for?'**

In the women's draw, Halep swatted aside Danka Kovinic -- conqueror of US Open champion