

Bahrain run riot in Asian Championship

Fourth consecutive win in the tournament

● Second half belonged entirely to Bahrain

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TDT | Manama

Bahrain kicked off their main round campaign at the 22nd Asian Men's Handball Championship in style, cruising to a 32-20 victory over the United Arab Emirates at the Sheikh Saad Al Abdullah Al Salim Al Sabah Hall in Kuwait City. The win marked the nationals' fourth consecutive win in the tournament, building on the confidence from their flawless preliminary rounds and last year's Islamic Solidarity Games gold. Their performance yesterday reflected the promise of the squad that claimed bronze on home soil at the 2024 Asian Championship. "We're far from done. We still have more in store for the remaining teams," Bahrain head coach Robert Hedin said, underlining the team's intent to push further this time around.

The first half was closely contested, with Bahrain holding a 12-10 advantage at the break. Both teams traded fast-paced goals, but the nationals' struc-

Bahrain 32 - 20 **UAE**

tured defence and measured attack kept them just ahead. UAE looked lively at times, yet Robert Hedin's men were always a step ahead, controlling the tempo and capitalising on every opening.

The second half belonged entirely to Bahrain, as the Emiratis looked woeful after the break, managing just ten goals. Jassim Khamis opened with a seven-metre strike, followed by a fast-break finish from Mohammed Habib Nasser. Skipper Hussain Al Sayyad then set up Habib for 19-13, while well-timed tactical fouls disrupted UAE's momentum. Khamis struck again to

make it 20-13, followed by Salman Alshoaiikh's precise seven-metre goal between the legs of UAE goalkeeper Mohammed Altaher - a moment that perfectly captured Bahrain's attacking flair.

Bahrain continued to dominate through the final 15 minutes, with goals from Qassim Qambar, Khamis, Alshoaiikh, Abdulla Abdulkarim, Jaffar Farsan, and Ali Alasheeri. Mohamed Habib

Nasser led the scoring with seven goals and earned man of the match honors for his outstanding display. Khamis also netted seven, while Salman Alshoaiikh, Qambar, and skipper Hussain Al Sayyad added three apiece. For the UAE, Waleed Rashed was their key player with five goals.

Today presents a sterner test, as the nationals take on defending champions Qatar at 2 pm, before concluding the main round against Saudi Arabia on Sunday at 4 pm. Semi-final spots and qualification for the 30th IHF Men's Handball World Championship in Germany, scheduled for January 13-29 next year, are at stake, and all four top-ranked sides will secure their tickets to the worlds. The stage will then be set for the gold and bronze medal games, scheduled for January 29.

Yesterday's performance not only extends Bahrain's unbeaten run but also reinforces their reputation as a continental powerhouse. Since 2010, the team has consistently finished in the top four at the Asian Championships, showing that this squad is on track to go all the way.

Man of the match Mohammed Habib Nasser looks for a way past UAE's Ibrahim Ali



AFM brings two generations of Fittipaldi to Bahrain for GCC Single-Seater Test Programme

Manama

AFM operates as part of ASPIRE, an Advanced Technology Research Council company, which also runs A2RL, Abu Dhabi's Autonomous Racing League. Together, these initiatives reflect a shared focus on performance, innovation, and the advancement of motorsport and mobility technologies in the region.

AFM hosted a landmark test at Bahrain International Circuit (BIC), welcoming two-time Formula One World Champion Emerson Fittipaldi and his son Emilio Fittipaldi as part of its expanding single-seater testing programme in the Gulf region.

The test underlined AFM's role in delivering professional, structured single seater running across the GCC, utilising current Formula One venues to support driver development with meaningful track time outside of the competitive season.

Running on the Bahrain Grand Prix layout, the programme brought together two generations of elite driving talent on



one of the world's most technically demanding circuits. For Emerson Fittipaldi, the test offered an opportunity to experience first-hand the evolution of single-seater performance and motorsport engineering.

Emilio Fittipaldi focused on preparation ahead of his 2026 campaign in Formula 2 with AIX Racing. AFM's Bahrain test also formed part of a wider programme supporting drivers competing across the international single-seater ladder. The team has been working closely with MP Motorsport and rising Italian talent Mattia Colnaghi, who is backed by the Red Bull Junior Team. The programme provides valuable preparation time on Formula One circuits that feature prominently on the global calendar, reinforcing the importance of structured testing in modern driver development.

BIC Chief Executive Shaikh Salman bin Isa Al Khalifa said: "We are pleased to host AFM's single seater testing programme and welcome drivers from across the international racing ladder to Bahrain. The circuit is designed to support high-level testing and development, and initiatives like this reinforce Bahrain's position as a key motorsport hub in the region."

Josh Roles, AFM Team Manager, said: "Our focus is on delivering high-quality single-seater testing at the most relevant circuits in the region. By operating across Bahrain, Abu Dhabi, Jeddah and Qatar, we're able to offer drivers valuable preparation on tracks that play a major role in modern motorsport. Combined with our team of highly experienced former Formula One engineers and mechanics, it creates a professional environment for genuine driver development."

Emerson Fittipaldi said: "Testing



on a modern Formula One circuit like Bahrain really highlights how far the cars and the sport have developed. The performance, the systems, and the overall approach are very different, and it's fascinating to experience that evolution on track." Emilio Fittipaldi said: "This kind of out-of-season testing is extremely important. Being able to run at circuits like Bahrain with a professional team gives you a strong foundation going into the season, especially when these tracks are part of the championship calendar."

Mattia Colnaghi said: "Testing

in Bahrain with AFM is a great opportunity. These are circuits you race on at the highest level, so being able to learn the layout, conditions and work closely with engineers outside of a race weekend in a well-structured environment is incredibly valuable for development."

AFM continues to strengthen the GCC's position as a premier destination for single-seater testing, combining world-class facilities with experienced personnel to support drivers at every stage of their careers.



The Bahrain International Circuit, opened in 2004 in Sakhir, was the first Formula One-grade circuit in the Middle East and has hosted the Bahrain Grand Prix almost every year since its debut.

Mercedes unveil 2026 F1 car for new 2026 rules

London, United Kingdom

Mercedes boss Toto Wolff said on Thursday that Formula One would undergo "significant change" in 2026 as the team unveiled their new car.

The British-based outfit dominated the sport from 2014 to 2021, winning eight constructors' titles and seven drivers' championships.

But they were overtaken by Red Bull and McLaren after the previous set of new rules was introduced in 2022.

Fresh chassis and engine regulations are being introduced this season in a major shake-up in the sport.

Mercedes, with Briton George Russell and Italian Kimi Antonelli at the wheel, have been tipped to set the pace.

The team released digital images of their new W17 car on Thursday, describing the 2026 season as "the biggest tech-



nical shake-up in the sport's history".

The W17 is smaller, narrower, and lighter than its predecessor.

Pre-season testing starts next week behind closed doors at the Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya, with further testing in Bahrain ahead of the Australian Grand Prix on March 8.

Bangladesh refuse to go to India for T20 World Cup

AFP | Dhaka, Bangladesh

Bangladesh will not travel to India to play in next month's T20 World Cup, its cricket board said yesterday, effectively ruling the country out of the tournament.

"Our only demand is to play the World Cup -- but not in India," Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) President Aminul Islam Bulbul told reporters.

The refusal came a day after cricket's governing body

rejected Bangladesh's plea to play its games in Sri Lanka instead.

"There is no scope for changing our decision," said Asif Nazrul, an adviser for youth and sports issues in Bangladesh's interim government.

The T20 World Cup begins on February 7, with Bangladesh scheduled to play their four group matches in the Indian cities of Kolkata and Mumbai.