

Bahrain sign off from qualifiers with victory

Ahmed Salman scores 10 points in last two minutes to help hosts survive late Iraq surge

● **Maitham Jameel top scores for Bahrainis with 21 points, while Kevin Galloway leads Iraqis with 18**

● **Bahrain complete successful qualifying campaign for FIBA Asia Cup 2021 with 4-2 win-loss record**

TDT | Manama

Ahmed Salman scored 10 points in the last two minutes to help lift Bahrain to a thrilling 80-77 victory over Iraq last night in both teams' final game of the FIBA Asia Cup 2021 qualifiers.

Salman first buried two three-pointers to help give his team some breathing room after Iraq erased a 10-point deficit with an 11-1 run late in the fourth quarter. The wily Manama Club point guard then made a lay-up with just over 20 seconds remaining, and on Bahrain's next possession, sank two pressure-packed free-throws to put the hosts up 80-76 with nine seconds to go.

Iraq were able to get to within three points on a Kevin Galloway free-throw, but after a Bahrain turnover, Galloway's potential game-tying triple hit the back of the iron as time expired.

Maitham Jameel top scored for Bahrain in the win with 21 points but he was ejected from the game after being called for two unsportsmanlike fouls.

Salman added 14 while Mohammed Kudded scored 13 points and Mohammed Hussain



Bahrain's Maitham Jameel looks to make a play as he is guarded by Iraq's Kevin Galloway

Standings

Group D

	P	W	L	+/-	Pts
*Lebanon	6	6	0	+169	12
*Bahrain	6	4	2	-35	10
India	6	2	4	-78	8
Iraq	6	0	6	-56	6

Group F

	P	W	L	+/-	Pts
Kazakhstan	5	4	1	+166	9
Palestine	4	2	2	+57	6
Sri Lanka	5	0	5	-281	5
Jordan	2	2	0	+58	4



Ahmed Salman's late-game heroics included two three-pointers, a driving lay-up in traffic and two pressure-packed free-throws with under 10 seconds left

had 12. Big man CJ Giles also had a big impact on the result as he finished with six points and 11 rebounds.

Galloway paced Iraq with 18. Mohammed Al Khafaji chipped in with 13 and Ali Hamad had 11.

The contest had no bearing on either side's hopes of making it to the continent's biggest basketball competition, as the Bahrainis had already secured their place while the Iraqis had

bowed out from contention.

Bahrain and Iraq were both in Group D of qualifying along with Lebanon and India. Games in their division took place in the Kingdom along with that of Group F, which featured Kazakhstan, Palestine and Sri Lanka.

Bahrain finished the qualifiers with a 4-2 win-loss record, while

Lebanon, Kazakhstan victorious

TDT | Manama

Lebanon defeated India 99-71 last night while Kazakhstan made easy work of Sri Lanka 107-37 as all four teams closed out this window of games in Bahrain in FIBA Asia Cup 2021 qualifying.

Lebanon's win earned them a pristine 6-0 win-loss record to wrap up a successful qualification bid as winners of Group D, while Kazakhstan's triumph kept them in first place in Group F with one game still to play on a yet-to-be-determined date.

The Kingdom was the host over the past week of these Cup qualifiers involving seven national teams from both groups.

In Lebanon's win, the victors held a narrow 51-44 lead at the half, but then the game turned in the third quarter when they outscored their rivals 28-14. The Lebanese rode their momentum into the final period and led by as many as 32 in the game's closing moments, en route to securing the lopsided win.

Joseph Chartouny top scored for Lebanon with 24 points, including four three-pointers. Gerard Hadidian added 16 while Sergio El Darwich and Karim Ezzeddine chipped in with 14 apiece.

Aravind Annadurai was India's only player to finish in



Lebanon's Karim Ezzeddine goes for a two-handed reverse dunk during their game against India yesterday

double figures with 19. He also had nine rebounds.

Following the result, Lebanon can now look forward to playing in the FIBA Asia Cup in August of this year. India, on the other hand, dropped to a 2-4 win-loss mark but are still in the running for a place in the continental showcase. They will need to play in another tournament that features all six third-placed teams from this stage of qualifying, for the right to claim four more Cup berths.

Meanwhile, Kazakhstan held Sri Lanka to a woeful two points in the first quarter while pouring in 37 for a virtually insurmountable lead. The Sri Lankans never recovered from

there and Kazakhstan enjoyed leads as big as their final winning margin of 70.

All 12 Kazakhstan players made it onto the score sheet. Anton Bykov led their charge with 21 points. Askar Maidekin added 18 while Vadim Chsherbak and Ruslan Aitkali each had 10.

For Sri Lanka, Don Deenu Mahamuhandirange had nine points as none of their players reached double figures.

With the result, Kazakhstan improved to a 4-1 win-loss record on the Group F standings while Sri Lanka remained winless after five outings. They each have just a game to play before completing their qualification bids.

Iraq were winless in six games.

Facing a 32-36 deficit at the break, Bahrain came out firing in the second half and went on a 9-0 run to take the lead. They

later had a 10-0 rally to put them ahead 57-49 heading into the fourth.

The Bahrainis led 64-54 following a transition three-point-

er by Jameel with just over six minutes to go. But Iraq roared back to tie the proceedings in the closing minutes, which set the stage for Salman's heroics.

New Sri Lanka Covid case on eve of West Indies tour

AFP | London

Sri Lankan fast bowler Lahiru Kumara tested positive Monday for coronavirus on the eve of the team's departure to the West Indies for a tour already delayed by the virus.

The 24-year-old had been with the rest of the 35-man squad in a bio-secure bubble since February 10.

He played two practice matches on Friday and Saturday.

News of the infection is the latest blow to the tour of three one-day internationals, three Twenty20s and two Tests due to start in Antigua on March 3.

It was originally due to begin on February 21 but was postponed after Sri Lanka's Lahiru Thirimanne and coach Mickey Arthur tested positive.

Both have fully recovered and will travel with the rest of the squad, which was yet to be officially named.

'No excuses' - Flick demands embattled Bayern bounce back at Lazio

AFP | Munich

Bayern Munich coach Hansi Flick insists there can be no excuses when the Champions League holders face Lazio away in Tuesday's last 16, first leg after a recent dip in form.

"I want my team to be switched on from the start and I have total confidence they will do that at Lazio," Flick said in Monday's press conference.

Bayern suffered a 2-1 defeat at Eintracht Frankfurt on Saturday following a 3-3 draw against strugglers Arminia Bielefeld upon their return from winning the Club World Cup in Qatar 11 days ago.

The strength in depth of Bayern's squad has been tested since Benjamin Pavard and Thomas Mueller both tested positive for Covid-19.

Midfielder Corentin Tolisso is also sidelined by a long-term thigh injury.

Nevertheless, Flick is demanding the Bundesliga leaders respond at Rome's Olympic Stadium.

"We all know what has happened in the last few days,"



Bayern Munich's coach Hans-Dieter Flick (L) reacts next to Kingsley Coman

"We have to see that we're fit again for the Champions League. These are special games which should motivate the players"

HANSI FLICK

Flick added. "I'm not looking for excus-

es. We weren't good against Bielefeld and Frankfurt.

"We have to see that we're fit again for the Champions League. These are special games which should motivate the players."

Defender Niklas Suele is carrying a knock, so Joshua Kimmich is expected to switch from midfield to right-back.

Flick said Germany midfielder Leon Goretzka will make his first start since contracting Covid-19 in January.

Ganna wins UAE Tour time trial as Pogacar grabs lead



Filippo Ganna of Team Ineos Grenadiers rides during the second stage time trial of the UAE Tour

AFP | Dubai

Italy's Filippo Ganna won Monday's 13km individual time trial on the second stage of the UAE Tour as Tour de France champion Tadej Pogacar took over the race lead.

Ineos rider Ganna, the reigning time trial world champion, clocked 13min 56sec on the circuit around Al Hudaayriyat Island, finishing 14sec clear of Switzerland's Stefan Bissegger.

Pogacar was fourth on the day and inherited the leader's red jersey vacated by Mathieu van der Poel following Alpecin-Fenix's decision to

withdraw from the race after a member of the team's staff tested positive for Covid-19.

The Slovene holds a five-second lead over Portugal's Joao Almeida, who came sixth in the time trial.

"I did not start with any particular result in my mind, I just wanted to go as fast and as good as I could and I think I managed to do that," said Pogacar.

"I'm in a good position now with five stages to go, but anything can happen, and tomorrow we already have the hardest finish for this Tour at Jabel Hafeet."