

# Al Ahli claim Super Cup 'three-peat'

Holders defeat challengers Manama 85-70 to retain coveted title for third successive season

● Al Ahli lead by as many as 19 points in resounding victory against arch-rivals

● American professional Jerry Jefferson scores 35 points to spearhead victors

TDT | Manama

Al Ahli last night completed an impressive "three-peat" after winning the Bahrain Super Cup title for the third successive season.

Ahli clinched the coveted 2022/2023 trophy with a resounding 85-70 victory over arch-rivals Manama.

The game was played at the Zain Basketball Arena in Um Al Hassam, and it was held in honour of former Bahrain Basketball Association (BBA) president the Late Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Khalifa.

The winners were presented their trophy in a ceremony following the game.

With the result, Ahli not only won the cup for the third straight year; they also clinched it for the fourth time in the game's history, equalling the record previously held by Manama, who triumphed from the 2015/2016 to the 2018/2019 seasons.

Ahli and Manama earned their places in this year's Bahrain Su-



Al Ahli players and officials celebrate after the awarding ceremony



Al Ahli's Mohammed Qurban, right, receives the Bahrain Super Cup



**Al Ahli and Manama earned their places in the Bahrain Super Cup—the traditional curtain-raising game of the new national basketball season—with Ahli being the reigning Khalifa bin Salman Cup champions and Manama finishing as the league winners from last season**

per Cup—the traditional curtain-raising game of the new campaign—with Ahli being the reigning Khalifa bin Salman Cup champions and Manama finishing as the league winners from last season.

Ahli enjoyed leads as big as 19 points during last night's clash but Manama periodically showed signs of threatening.

Ahli held a slim 23-19 advantage at the end of the first quarter and then extended the gap to eight 42-34 at the interval.

Then, in the third, versatile forward Mohammed Kowayed put Ahli ahead 63-44 with a three-pointer. Manama battled back and got to within 10 in the period's closing moments, but Kowayed was on target once more from beyond the arc just before the quarter buzzer to make it 72-59 heading into the

final canto.

There, Ahli did well to keep Manama adrift by double digits and stave off any late charge.

American Jerry Jefferson scored 35 points and took down 16 rebounds while playing all 40 minutes to spearhead Ahli. Star guard Hesham Sarhan added 18, while Kowayed had 11 and Maitham Jameel 10.

For Manama, Ahmed Salman scored 20 points coming off the bench while former NBA first round pick Jordan Lee Crawford from the US added 15 and Mohammed Hassan Aldurazi, who was facing his former club, chipped in with 11.

The naming of this year's Bahrain Super Cup after the Late Shaikh Mohammed was in appreciation of his great efforts in

developing Bahrain basketball as his contributions as head of during his presidency, as well basketball at Muharraq Club.



Hesham Sarhan looks to penetrate against the tough defence of Ahmed Hassan Aldurazi

## Raducanu feels the love to surge into Korea Open quarter-finals

AFP | Seoul

Emma Raducanu enjoyed support from the Korea Open crowd on the way to a straight-sets win over 396th-ranked Yanina Wickmayer and a place in the quarter-finals yesterday.

Raducanu, who crashed out of the US Open in the first round last month as her title defence fell flat, overcame some late resistance to beat the experienced Belgian 6-3, 7-5 in Seoul.

The 19-year-old Briton said that her serving, including nine aces, formed the backbone of victory and she next faces third seed Magda Linette of Poland.

"I think that serving big and serving well and a lot of aces, especially in the second set, helped me get off to a pretty good lead, 4-1 up, which gave me bit of a cushion because Yanina started fighting back and it was a competitive second set," said the sixth seed.

Eyeing up the 30-year-old Linette in the last eight, the former US Open champion added: "Linette is a challenging opponent with many years more experience than me. I'm focused on that match and not thinking further ahead."



Emma Raducanu in action



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EMMA RADUCANU

Raducanu reached a career-high 10th in the world in July, but is now 77th, having failed to build on her shock success at Flushing Meadows last year.

## Champions Najma defeat Samaheej to stay undefeated

● Barbar edge past Tubli for first win of new season in 2022/2023 Khalid bin Hamad Bahrain Handball League

TDT | Manama

Defending champions Al Najma outclassed Samaheej 37-28 last night in their week three game of the 2022/2023 Khalid bin Hamad Bahrain Handball League, being played at the Bahrain Handball Association Arena in Um Al Hassam.

Najma enjoyed a commanding 21-14 advantage in a high-scoring first half, and despite Sama-



Action from Najma's win against Samaheej

heej getting as close as two goals after the break, Najma were just too good on the night and built a comfortable lead in the closing minutes.

Najma won their third succes-

The contest was tied at 12-11 at the half, and things remained close after the break. Barbar led by just one goal with less than a minute remaining, but then after a timeout, Ali Abdulqader put the game away with a goal from the six-metre stripe.

Tubli could not answer on the ensuing possession and then Barbar pegged the final score on a Fastbreak.

The result earned Barbar their first win of the season after drawing and then losing their opening two fixtures. Tubli, on the other hand, suffered a third successive loss and stayed bottom of the league standings.

League action continues tonight with just one game on schedule. At 7pm, Al Ettifaq face off with Al Shabab.

## Osaka pulls out of Pan Pacific Open with stomach pain

AFP | Tokyo

Former tennis world number one Naomi Osaka pulled out of her home Pan Pacific Open in Tokyo yesterday after complaining of abdominal pain.

The Japanese 24-year-old was set to play Brazil's Beatriz Haddad Maia in the second round but withdrew saying her



Naomi Osaka

"body won't let" her compete. "It's an honour to be able to play at the Toray Pan Pacific



**This has and always will be a special tournament for me and I wish I could have stepped on court today, but my body won't let me**

NAOMI OSAKA

Open in front of the amazing fans here in Japan," Osaka said in a statement released by organisers.

"This has and always will be a special tournament for me and I wish I could have stepped on court today, but my body won't let me."

"Thank you for all your support this week and I will see you next year," she added.