

Captain Fantastic!

Al Sayyad's Heroics Push Bahrain Toward Semis & 2027 Worlds

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

Bahrain edged closer to the semi-finals of the 22nd Asian Men's Handball Championship with a stunning 31-28 win over defending champions Qatar in Kuwait City. Unlike their previous dominant double-digit wins, this match truly tested the nationals, with captain Hussain Al Sayyad stepping up to deliver an outstanding 11 goals. The result has put Bahrain just one win away from securing a semi-final spot and automatic qualification for the 2027 IHF Men's Handball World Championship in Germany, while also extending their unbeaten run in the tournament to five matches.

Yesterday's match started at a blistering pace, and from the first whistle, the Bahrainis set the tone. Mohammed Habib Nasser struck early, giving Bahrain a 7-3 lead by the eighth minute, with goalkeeper Mohammed Abdullhussain producing vital saves to keep Qatar at bay. But the reigning champions responded, and by the 16th minute the score was level at 7-7. Skipper Hussain Al Sayyad then steadied his side, scoring vital goals as the first half ended 12-12. His influential performance later awarded him the man-of-the-match honors.

The second half saw Robert Hedin's men gradually seize control. Qassim Qambar opened the scoring, followed



Hussain Al Sayyad celebrates as Bahrain bench erupts

by Al Sayyad and Habib Nasser combining on fast breaks to stretch Qatar's defence. By the 13-minute mark, Bahrain led 25-21 and maintained the advantage for the remainder of the match. Al Sayyad finished with a remarkable 11 goals, while Qassim Qambar was flawless, converting all six of his shots.

For Qatar, Ahmed Mohamed and Frankis Marzo tried to keep their side in contention, but Bahrain's composure and all-round performance proved too decisive.

Coach Robert Hedin had promised that the nationals "still have more in store for the remaining teams," and the

squad delivered. Bahrain now turn their attention to tomorrow's final main round match against Saudi Arabia at 4 pm, again at Sheikh Saad Al Abdullah Al Salim Al Sabah Hall. A win there victory would seal their spot in the semi-finals and punch their ticket to next year's worlds.

Williams to miss opening F1 test due to car delays



Williams' Spanish driver Carlos Sainz (front) and Williams' Thai driver Alexander Albon (rear) walk on stage past the new Formula 1 car of Williams (file photo)

AFP | London

Williams' preparations for the 2026 Formula One season have been dealt a significant blow after conceding defeat in having their car ready for next week's first testing session in Barcelona.

A major upheaval of the sport's technical rulebook has meant a race against time for teams to be ready for the new season.

The opening five days of testing takes place behind closed doors at the Circuit de Catalunya circuit from Monday.

There are a further two sets of three-day tests in Bahrain next month ahead of the first race in Australia on March 8.

"Williams F1 Team has taken the decision not to participate in next week's shakedown test in Barcelona following delays in the FW48 programme as we

continue to push for maximum car performance," the British team said in a statement yesterday.

"The team will instead conduct a series of tests including a VTT (Virtual Test Track) programme next week with the 2026 car to prepare for the first official test in Bahrain and the first race of the season in Melbourne.

"We are looking forward to getting on track in the coming weeks and want to thank all our fans for your continued support - there is a lot to look forward to together in 2026."

Williams finished an impressive fifth in last year's constructors' championship.

Alex Albon and Carlos Sainz finished eighth and ninth respectively in the drivers' standings last season, with the latter landing two podium finishes to ensure Williams' best season in a decade.

Fuming Kyrgios 'does not know' what comes after Australian Open



Australia's Nick Kyrgios throws his racket during his men's doubles match

AFP | Melbourne

Drained, hobbling and "pissed off" Nick Kyrgios said he did not know where his career was going next after the former Wimbledon finalist suffered defeat in the first round of the Australian Open men's doubles.

The temperamental Kyrgios and playing partner Thanasi Kokkinakis were dumped out over three sets in a late-night all-Australian clash at a boisterous Melbourne Park.

The 2022 Wimbledon runner-up and Kokkinakis were dubbed the "Special Ks" by local media, but with both struggling physically they went out

6-4, 4-6, 7-6 (10/4) to countrymen Jason Kubler and Marc Polmans late Thursday.

Crowd favourite Kyrgios, 30, who has barely played singles in recent years after a series of injuries, is scheduled to play with Canada's Leylah Fernandez in the mixed doubles yesterday, if his weary body recovers in time.

But after that, Kyrgios does not know what the future holds.

"I'm tired. I mean, I've done a lot of travel," said Kyrgios, who beat women's world number one Aryna Sabalenka in a "Battle of the Sexes" exhibition match in Dubai in December that divided tennis fans.

Ferrari unveil 2026 car with Hamilton ready for 'massive challenge'

AFP | Fiorano Modenese

Lewis Hamilton is braced for the "massive challenge" of adapting to the seismic change in technical regulations facing the 2026 Formula One grid as Ferrari unveiled their new car yesterday.

The seven-time world champion and his teammate Charles Leclerc put the SF-26 through its paces at the Scuderia's Fiorano private test track near their Maranello headquarters.

"It's the biggest regulation shift I think our sport has seen, at least in my time," the 41-year-old Briton said.

"But every single time that it has been a shift into a new regulation, it's been a massive challenge.

"Everyone starts from scratch, so it really levels the playing field. Then it's really all about development, who can develop faster, who comes up with the best ideas, and then a unified team growing at the same pace."

Ferrari team principal Fred Vasseur reflected on "an emotional day" seeing their new creation emerge out of the garage and onto the track.

"It went pretty well, huge amount of work but we are all more than happy, it's not the end of the story but the beginning of the season," he said.

"Let's be positive and enjoy



The new Formula 1 Ferrari SF-26 is seen during tests at Fiorano Circuit in Fiorano Modenese

the story."

The Frenchman added: "It was good to see the car leave the garage but it's the start of a new journey."

"Too early for expectations"

Given all 11 teams are in the same boat, starting from scratch, Vasseur was keen to play down expectations for the season-opener in Australia in early March.

"We'll see the situation in Melbourne, today was a first step," said Vasseur.

"The rate of development will be much higher than years before.

"We will see about performance in Melbourne, it's too early for expectations."

For the first time in his illustrious career Hamilton failed to even muster a podium finish last term as Ferrari slumped to fourth in the constructors' standings.

They were last crowned constructors' champions in 2008, with Kimi Raikkonen supplying the last of their 15 drivers' titles

the year before.

Hamilton has admitted that the last time cars were radically changed in 2022 they did not suit his driving style.

He will be desperately hoping the 2026 reiteration will be more to his taste in the twilight years of his decorated career.

He moved from Mercedes to Ferrari in the hope of securing a record eighth world title - but given his woeful debut year now he will be relieved just to win another race.