

Muharraq Clinch Khalifa bin Salman Cup

Red Wolves roar into history to tie Manama and Al Ahli with 3 titles



Muharraq squad rejoices after capturing coveted season trophy

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TDT | Manama

Muharraq clinched back-to-back Khalifa bin Salman Cup titles with an 80-73 win over Manama last night at Khalifa Sports City. Played behind closed doors due to regional conflicts, the victory completed a clean sweep of their rivals this season and brought Muharraq level with the league's most decorated sides on three titles.

In a final that rarely allowed either side to settle, Muharraq seized control in key stretches, particularly in the third quarter, where they began to pull away after a tight first half. Mohamed Ameer's dominant

presence in the paint and crucial three-pointers earned him tournament MVP honors, underlining his pivotal role in the Red Wolves' success.

Manama, guided by coach Salman Ramadhan, showed early resilience. Ali Jaber and Ahmed Salman briefly pushed them ahead in the second quarter, keeping the scoreboard ticking with sharp shooting and drives. Muharraq, under German coach Peter Schomers, responded through Michael Warren, who finished as the game's top scorer with 20 points, and Ameer to take a slim 41-38 lead at half-time.

After the interval, the game swung in Muharraq's favor. They tightened defensively and

capitalized on Manama's turnovers. Warren and captain Bader Abdulla extended the lead, while Ameer's three-pointer and Wayne Chism's rebounding pushed the advantage into double digits heading into the fourth quarter.

Manama mounted a fightback midway through the final period. Ahmed Salman sparked a rally with free throws and a three-pointer, and Hasan Nowrooz added long-range points to cut the deficit to five. But Muharraq stayed composed. Warren's late free throws, Chism's boards, and timely contributions from Mahmood Abbas Isa sealed the victory.

Manama, missing injured forward Subah Hussain, were

led by Ahmed Salman's 20 points and Romeo Enan's 14 points with 13 rebounds, but they struggled to sustain momentum when it mattered most.

The result caps a dominant campaign for the Red Wolves, who added the Khalifa bin Salman Cup to their Super Cup triumph earlier this season. It also sees them draw level with Manama and Al Ahli as the most decorated teams in the competition's history. Attention now turns to the Zain Basketball League semi-finals later this week, where Muharraq face Al Ahli and Manama take on Al Najma, with the rivalry set to continue in a best-of-five series format.

England coach McCullum survives review into Ashes drubbing



England's managing director of men's cricket Rob Key (right) and head coach Brendon McCullum (file photo)

AFP | London

England coach Brendon McCullum will keep his job despite the team's Ashes debacle, with cricket chief Richard Gould insisting he can "adapt and evolve".

Ben Stokes's men were hammered 4-1 on their five-Test tour of Australia, which started in November and ended in January.

In addition to their poor performances there were reports of excessive drinking by players while they were on a break, raising concerns about the dressing-room culture.

Revelations followed that vice-captain Harry Brook had been involved in an altercation with a nightclub bouncer on the pre-Ashes visit to New Zealand.

But Stokes, McCullum, and England managing director Rob Key will all keep their jobs following a review of the Ashes campaign by the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB).

McCullum, at the helm since 2022, has been responsible for England's aggressive "Bazball" approach to red-ball cricket.

But his methods have failed to yield a series win against India or Australia -- England's main rivals.

"There was a lot of consideration as to what is the right mix of leadership and who do we want and who do we need?" ECB chief executive Richard Gould told a briefing at Lord's.

"I think what we've seen is a determination from all those involved to adapt and evolve, to understand that there are different ways of doing things and through the disappointment and difficulties of the Ashes to learn from that.

"And so, you know, we've got a lot of people, yes, hurt by what went on during the Ashes, but equally determined to now put things right and looking forward to seeking revenge in 2027 (when Australia tour England)."

Arsenal's White gets first England call-up since 2022



Arsenal's Ben White (C) arrives ahead of a match (file photo)

AFP | London

Arsenal defender Ben White has been called up to the England squad for the first time since the 2022 World Cup.

The 28-year-old right-back has not featured for the national team since leaving the camp in Qatar for personal reasons. He subsequently made himself unavailable for selection for the remainder of Gareth Southgate's spell in charge.

But he is back in the fold for friendlies against Uruguay and Japan, after Bayer Leverkusen's Jarell Quansah withdrew from Thomas Tuchel's 35-man

squad with an injury.

White has won four England caps, last featuring in a 3-0 win against Ivory Coast in March 2022.

There is still no place in the squad for Real Madrid defender Trent Alexander-Arnold, who is also a right-back.

White's Gunners teammate Eberechi Eze is also out of the camp and has been replaced by Newcastle winger Harvey Barnes, 28, who won his only previous cap six years ago.

England host Uruguay at Wembley on Friday, with a match to follow against Japan on March 31.

Griezmann given go-ahead to talk with Orlando City

AFP | Madrid

France's World Cup-winning striker Antoine Griezmann is to hold talks with Major League Soccer's Orlando City, having been permitted by his present side Atletico Madrid to go to the US during the international break, a source close to the player told AFP.

Should both parties agree a deal, the 35-year-old would move to Orlando this summer after seeing out the present campaign with the La Liga outfit.

Griezmann "has been authorised by his club to travel to Orlando during his days off in order to make progress in the discussions linked to his future," said the source yesterday.

A move to the MLS has been rumoured for years, with the 2018 World Cup winner known to be an admirer of other American sports leagues such as the NBA and NFL.

Atletico had shut the door on their all-time record goalscorer -- he has scored 211 goals over two spells -- moving this season with the MLS transfer window opening on March 26.

Griezmann, who also played in the 2022 World Cup final defeat by Argentina, retired from



Real Madrid's Spanish defender #20 Francisco Garcia (L) and Atletico Madrid's French forward #07 Antoine Griezmann fight for the ball

the French national side in 2024 having made 137 appearances, scoring 44 goals.

Griezmann signed an extension last year to his present contract, taking him up to June 2027, but is no longer an automatic first choice for Atletico.

Despite falling down the pecking order he has scored 13 times this season and can

entertain hopes of ending his time with Atletico with one last hurrah.

They play Real Sociedad, the club he began his professional career with, in the final of the Copa del Rey on April 18, just after facing Barcelona in their two-legged Champions League quarter-final.

Griezmann inspired Atletico

in his first spell to 2018 Europa League glory, but missed out on the biggest prizes, losing in the 2016 Champions League final and finishing runners-up in the title race in 2018 and 2019.

Orlando are badly in need of a cutting edge up front as in the present MLS campaign they have won just one of their five matches, losing the other four.