

EXCLUSIVE

# Okafor Israel scores lightning-fast KO in Dubai



Israel celebrates his victory with teammates Abdulrahman Mohamed (left) and Mohsen Zayer (right)

**Hussain Almaskati**  
TDT | Manama

Okafor Israel delivered a statement victory on Friday night at the Elite Boxing Promotion event in Dubai, UAE, staged by the Cuban Boxing Club. The Nigerian-born fighter, who represents Bahrain, stopped Egypt's Medhat AlHusiny in just 57 seconds of the first round to secure his second professional win.

Fighting out of Underground Gym Bahrain, the cruiserweight wasted no time asserting control. From the opening bell, Okafor Israel pressed forward aggressively, immediately closing distance and denying his opponent any chance to settle into rhythm or mount an offense. The early pressure proved overwhelming, as he scored a knockdown before the referee stepped in to halt the contest.

The emphatic finish further strengthened his growing reputation on the regional boxing scene.

Speaking exclusively to The Daily Tribune, Israel reflected on the swift ending and the preparation behind it.

"In boxing, you prepare for every possible scenario, so I was ready for a long and difficult fight. I didn't necessarily expect it to end that quickly, but I trusted my preparation, my timing, and the work my team at Underground Gym, my manager Mr. Miller Pounds, and Spartan put into camp. Once I saw the opening, I stayed composed and took it. Credit to Medhat Al Husiny for stepping into the ring and competing."

Israel also emphasized the intent behind such a dominant performance.

"It was very important for me to make a strong statement, put-

ting the cruiserweight division in the GCC on notice, but always with discipline and respect. My goal was to show my growth as a professional boxer — sharpness, control, composure, and intelligence under pressure. I wanted people to see that I'm improving with every fight and representing Bahrain and my team in the best way possible."

Beyond the result, the victory carried personal significance as Israel continues to develop his career while representing the Kingdom and Underground Gym Bahrain on the professional stage.

"This win means a lot to me personally because the journey hasn't been easy. Representing Bahrain and Underground Gym Bahrain is something I carry with pride. The support, belief, and sacrifices from my coaches, teammates, friends, and sup-

porters motivate me every day. This victory is not just for me, it's for everyone who stood by me and believed in the vision."

Looking ahead, the rising cruiserweight made it clear this is only the beginning of his professional journey, with a focus on staying active and continuing to improve.

"I will hit the gym immediately and start from where I stopped. I want to stay active, keep learning, and continue building my professional career step by step. Performances like this give me confidence, but I know there is still a lot of work ahead. I would like to get back in the ring as soon as the right opportunity comes, and I'm ready to represent Bahrain on even bigger stages in the future."

## Al Najma brace for tough Asian challenge

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**Hussain Almaskati**

Photo caption: Al Najma's Mohamed Habib in action during their second Asian title win in Iran last year

Bahrain's Al Najma now know their full path in the Asian Men's Club League Handball Championship 2026 after the official match schedule was announced yesterday.

The 28th edition of the tournament will be staged in Kuwait City from June 6 to 15, bringing together eight of Asia's leading clubs in a battle for the continental title and a coveted



Al Najma's Mohamed Habib in action during their second Asian title win in Iran last year

place at the 2026 IHF Men's Club World Championship in Egypt.

Al Najma have been drawn in Group B alongside hosts Kuwait Sports Club, Saudi Arabia's Al

Khaleej Club, and Qatar's Al Arabi SC, setting up a demanding preliminary round campaign.

Their campaign begins on June 6 against Al Khaleej at 4pm, followed quickly by a clash with Al Arabi on June 7 at 2pm. After a rest day on June 8, Najma return to face Kuwait SC on June 9 at 6pm.

Group A features Burgan SC of Kuwait, Sharjah SC of the UAE, Al Duhail of Qatar, and a Chinese representative team, with matches running in parallel throughout the opening phase.

Only the top two teams from each group will advance to the semi-finals after a single

round-robin stage, with winners moving on to the final and a shot at continental supremacy.

Al Najma enter the competition as reigning Bahraini champions, having lifted the 2024-25 Khalid Bin Hamad Bahrain Handball League title. The club also carries strong continental pedigree, with two Asian titles in 2017 and 2023, plus multiple podium finishes across previous editions.

### Al Najma Group B Fixtures

Date	Time	Opponent
Sat, 6 June	16:00	Al Khaleej
Sun, 7 June	14:00	Al Arabi
Tue, 9 June	18:00	Al Kuwait SC

## Fernandes named Premier League Player of the Season



Bruno Fernandes with the award after his standout Premier League campaign

**Hussain Almaskati**  
TDT | Manama

Manchester United captain Bruno Fernandes has been named Premier League Player of the Season after an outstanding campaign, adding another major individual honour to his collection following earlier recognition as the Football Writers' Association Men's Player of the Year.

The 31-year-old Portuguese midfielder was central to United's strong league finish, helping the club secure third place and qualification for next season's UEFA Champions League. Across 37 league appearances, Fernandes recorded eight goals and 20 assists, underlining his consistent output in both scoring and creation.

His latest assist of the campaign against Nottingham Forest saw him equal the Premier League record for most assists in a single season, further reinforcing one of the most productive creative years in the competition's history.

Beyond his direct goal contributions, Fernandes also led the league in chance creation with 132 chances over the course of the season. That total placed him comfortably ahead of Liverpool midfielder Dominik Szoboszlai in the standings and highlighted his role as the league's primary creative force.

With this award, Fernandes becomes the first Manchester United player to win the Premier League Player of the Season since Nemanja Vidic in 2011. The honour was decided through a combination of public voting and input from a panel of football experts.

The shortlist featured several high-profile nominees including David Raya, Gabriel Magalhães, Declan Rice, Erling Haaland, Antoine Semenyo, Igor Thiago, and Morgan Gibbs-White.

Elsewhere, the Young Player of the Season award went to 20-year-old Manchester City academy graduate Nico O'Reilly.

## Barcelona win Women's Champions League, thrashing Lyon 4-0 in final



FC Barcelona players celebrate winning the UEFA Women's Champions League final football match between FC Barcelona and Olympique Lyonnais (OL) at the Ullevaal Stadium in Oslo, Norway

**AFF | Oslo, Norway**

Ewa Pajor and Salma Paralluelo both scored twice as Barcelona thrashed Lyon 4-0 in Saturday's Women's Champions League final to win the title for the fourth time.

Polish striker Pajor opened the scoring on 55 minutes and netted again in the 69th minute, with Paralluelo's superb

late strike ending the contest before she completed the rout of a stunned Lyon in stoppage time.

Barca's four titles have all been won in the last six seasons and their overall tally is bettered only by Lyon, who are the record eight-time European champions. The French club's last title came in 2022.

## Morocco king pardons jailed Senegal football fans

**AFF | Rabat, Morocco**

Morocco's King Mohammed VI has pardoned the Senegalese football supporters jailed after violence at the 2025 AFCON final in Rabat for "humanitarian reasons", a royal court statement said on Saturday.

It said that in view "of the age-old fraternal ties" between the two countries "and on the occasion of the advent of Eid al-Adha", the king has "granted, on humanitarian grounds, his royal pardon to the Senegalese supporters". The Muslim holiday will be celebrated on Wednesday in Morocco.