

# Bahrain bow to Argentina

● Bahrain put up spirited fight in Argentina loss in FIVB U21 Worlds

● Italy, Brazil secured their places in the last four

TDI | Manama

Bahrain put up a spirited fight against Argentina in a 1-3 (22-25, 19-25, 25-19, 15-25) loss yesterday night in the FIVB Volleyball Men's U21 World Championship 2019 at Shaikh Isa Sports City in Riffa.

The result was their second straight setback in Pool F of the tournament's second round, and it officially eliminated the hosts from further contention for a berth in the semi-finals.

The Argentinians, on the other hand, kept their bid alive and must win their last game today against Italy to have any chance of advancing.

The Italians, along with Brazil, have virtually secured their places in the last four after claiming their second wins yesterday in this ongoing stage.

Italy took down Asian champions Iran in the other Pool F encounter in a thrilling match that lasted over two hours, while Brazil claimed a well-deserved win over previously unbeaten Russia in Pool E. In the same group, China beat Korea in straight sets, setting up a do-or-die match-up with the Russians today for a berth in the final four.

The second round of the tournament concludes today and there is still plenty to play for



Brazil's Victor Aleksander Almeida Cardoso goes against the triple block of Russia

for all teams. The semi-finals are scheduled for Friday.

In Bahrain's loss, the home side managed to extend the match after losing the first two sets. Their rivals were too good in the end, however, and they managed to stay in the race for a semi-final place.

Argentina had the advantage in all categories in the match, including in attack (46-44), block (9-5) and serve (7-6), while also being gifted 32 points on Bahrain's errors.

Franco Medina was the top individual scorer for the Argentinians with 15 points, while Nicolas Zerba chipped in with 12. Bahrain captain Mahmood Abdulhusain led his team with 14 points, while Sayed Mohamed

Alabbar added 13.

In Italy's win, the Iranians were on the brink of forcing the tie-breaker late in the fourth set, but the Italians showed their mettle and fought back to eventually close things out for a hard-earned 3-1 (25-23, 25-22, 20-25, 31-29) triumph.

Daniele Lavia was in fine form, scoring 24 points to lead the winners. Kristian Gamba added another 16 for Italy. For Iran, Porya Yali was the top man with 20 while skipper Amirhossein Esfandiari added 17.

Italy head coach Monica Cresta commented: "It was extremely difficult to play against Iran. From the start, we knew that it was going to be tough. In the first two sets, we played well

even under pressure. In the third and fourth sets, they played absolutely better than us.

"This set that we lost against them means that we have to pay attention. It serves to make us understand that in this phase of the tournament, nothing is easy."

Meanwhile, Brazil virtually booked their final four tickets with their second straight win while handing Russia their first loss of the competition in a 3-1 (23-25, 25-22, 25-20, 25-22) decision.

Victor Aleksander Almeida Cardoso had 25 points to lead Brazil. Angellus Costa Da Silva added 13 in the win. Maksim Sapozhkov paced Russia with 22 points.

Brazil coach Giovane Gavio:

## YESTERDAY'S RESULTS

### POOL E

Brazil bt Russia 3-1 (23-25, 25-22, 25-20, 25-22)  
China bt Korea 3-0 (25-18, 25-22, 25-20)

### POOL F

Italy bt Iran 3-1 (25-23, 25-22, 20-25, 31-29)  
Argentina bt Bahrain 3-1 (25-22, 25-19, 19-25, 25-15)

### POOL G

Canada bt Czech Republic 3-2 (25-19, 20-25, 28-26, 15-25, 17-15)  
Egypt bt Puerto Rico 3-2 (25-23, 21-25, 22-25, 25-19, 15-12)

### POOL H

Poland bt Tunisia 3-0 (25-21, 25-16, 25-20)  
Cuba bt Morocco 3-0 (25-15, 25-22, 25-13)

## TODAY'S SCHEDULE

11.30am: Korea vs Brazil, Egypt vs Canada  
2pm: Russia vs China, Czech Republic vs Puerto Rico  
4.30pm: Italy vs Argentina, Morocco v Tunisia  
7pm: Bahrain vs Iran, Poland vs Cuba

"We played our best volleyball today. Russia is a strong team. I am very happy because we were able to play against a big team quite well."

China, meanwhile, bounced back from a loss the previous day with a resounding 3-0 (25-18, 25-22, 25-20) sweep of Korea in an all-Asian affair.

Chengcheng Xiu was the leading scorer for the Chinese with 13, while teammate Dejun Zhai had 12. Korea captain Donghyeok Im paced his spearheaded team with 10 points.

China captain Chen Leiyang said: "The match was really good because we did many things to prepare. We played well today."

Meanwhile, in the classifica-

tion groups, Canada and Egypt both needed to go the distance in five-set victories over their opponents, whereas Poland and Cuba both cruised in three-setters against theirs.

The Canadians beat the Czech Republic 3-2 (25-19, 20-25, 28-26, 15-25, 17-15) while Egypt battled back from a set down to win 3-2 (25-23, 21-25, 22-25, 25-19, 15-12) against Puerto Rico. Both matches were in Pool G.

In Pool H, Poland outclassed Tunisia 3-0 (25-21, 25-16, 25-20) to secure their place in the bracket for final rankings ninth through 12th, as did Cuba, who won Cuba bt Morocco 3-0 (25-15, 25-22, 25-13) against Morocco.

## Zidane: Bale declined to play

AFP | Washington

Real Madrid boss Zinedine Zidane has denied disrespecting Wales star Gareth Bale as he discussed the expected transfer of the 30-year-old forward from the La Liga giants on Monday.

Speaking to reporters on the eve of Real Madrid's friendly with Arsenal at FedEx Field -- home of the NFL's Washington Redskins -- Zidane said it was Bale who chose not to play in Madrid's 3-1 friendly defeat to Bayern in Houston on Saturday. "I did not disrespect anyone, least of all Gareth," a frustrated-sounding Zidane said. "I said that the club is working to facilitate Bale's departure, nothing more."

"The other day, Gareth did not dress for the game, he did not want to because the club was negotiating his departure," he added.

Zidane had been branded a "disgrace" by Bale's agent for his comments after the Saturday match, when he said he hoped Bale's move from the club happened soon "for everyone's sake."

"He shows no respect for a player that has done so much for Real Madrid," agent Jonathan Barnett fumed.

Bale has been frozen out in Madrid by Zidane despite helping his side to a Spanish title and four Champions Leagues since arriving from Tottenham Hotspur six years ago.

His brace, including a brilliant bicycle kick, sank Liverpool in the 2018 final, but he was shunted aside by Zidane as soon as he returned to the Real bench in early March.

After Zidane's reappointment, Bale played 90 minutes in just three of the remaining 11 matches, was left out completely four times and frequently substituted when he did play.

"Today, he is a Real Madrid player," Zidane said, adding that the striker would train with the team Monday night.



## De Gea keen to captain United as keeper nears new deal

Reuters | London

Manchester United goalkeeper David de Gea, reported to be on the verge of agreeing a six-year contract extension, has said he would welcome being captain of the Premier League club.

De Gea, 28, has

long been linked with a move away from Old Trafford but said he wanted to help the team return to the summit of English soccer at a supporters' event in Singapore.

United's previous captain Antonio Valencia left at the end of last season and De Gea is one of several players in the frame to replace him along with Ashley Young, Juan Mata, Chris Smalling and Paul Pogba.

"I've been captain for some games. Of course it is amazing to be captain of a club like Manchester United and defend this badge," De Gea

said. "It's amazing, so of course I'll be really, really happy to captain."

"It's my ninth season, I feel like one of the most experienced players. We have to improve a lot."

"We are Manchester United, we need to fight for trophies. When you put on this badge, that's what it means -- fight for everything, give your best and bring the team again to the top."

United, who have not lost a match on their pre-season tour so far, beating Perth Glory, Leeds United and Inter Milan, take on Tottenham Hotspur in Shanghai on Thursday.



David de Gea

## Arsenal's Emery admires Ceballos as they work on a signing

Reuters | Washington

Arsenal manager Unai Emery said on Monday that Real Madrid midfielder Dani Ceballos was someone he admired as the Premier League club work on bringing in one player.

The Gunners have yet to make a marquee signing in this transfer window, but British media have reported that Ceballos, 22, is close to completing a season-long loan move to London.

"We are speaking about

the possibility to sign one player, Emery said ahead of his side's final International Champions Cup match against Real in Washington D.C. yesterday. "We have different names and the club is working on that."

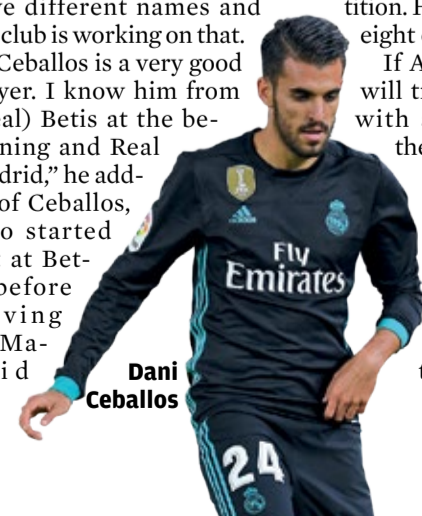
"Ceballos is a very good player. I know him from (Real) Betis at the beginning and Real Madrid," he added of Ceballos, who started out at Betis before moving to Madrid

in 2017.

"He played very well in the Under-21s (for Spain), his national team won the (2019 European Championship) competition. He can play as a number eight or a number 10."

If Arsenal beat Real they will travel back to England with a 100% record from their United States tour.

Arsenal's youngsters have been impressive, scoring seven of the team's eight pre-season goals, but Emery plans to give the senior players more game time in the U.S. capital.



Dani Ceballos