

# Al Sharif excels as Hague takes solo lead

Saudi teenager plays Day Two low score to go one shot behind leader in MENA Tour golf

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It was a proud moment for Saudi Arabian golfer and host venue Royal Golf Club yesterday when amateur Saud Al Sharif mastered the tough playing conditions to shoot the lowest round of the day and surge to tied-second place, just one behind leader David Hague, in the \$75,000 Royal Golf Club Bahrain Open.

The 19-year-old Al Sharif, a member of the Saudi national team, learned his golf at The Royal Golf Club where he has been based for the past 10 years. He used his immense local knowledge to the fullest on a day when strong and swirling wind posed tough questions and shot a six-under par 66. That moved him to tied second place at seven-under par 137, level with France's Antoine Schwartz (70).

Hague, who turned pro after MENA Tour by Arena Qualifying School and recently finished runner-up at the NEWGIZA Open in Cairo, was five-under par



Hague plays a shot during the second round yesterday

through his front nine (the back nine of the course), but stumbled on his way back with three bogeys and a double. A birdie on the last hole helped him close with a 70 and gave him a one-

shot cushion going into the final round.

Overnight joint-leader Joel Girschbach (72) of Sweden fell to tied fourth place at six-under par 138 alongside the promising



Al Sharif at the Royal Golf Club

Irishman Ryan Lumsden (67) and resurgent Frenchman Victor Riu (67).

"It is such an amazing day. I had an unbelievable round, my lowest ever on the MENA Tour!" said Al Sharif, who had sensationally made the cut last week in Oman after holing out his second shot on the par-4 17th hole for an eagle and a birdie on the last.

"My putter was on fire. I made putts from Saudi Arabia to Bahrain. Come to think of it, my short game was something that was holding me back. I have been working really hard on my putting and chipping with Jamie McConnell at the Claude Harmon Performance Institute in Dubai and it is showing result.

"Of course, I know this golf

course better than everyone else. But playing at home also brings a lot of pressure and hopefully, I can handle it tomorrow as well as I did today."

The consistent Hague drove his opening hole – the reachable par-4 10th – and started in the best possible way with an eagle. He made the turn at five-under par before two three-putts and a poor tee shot on the par-3 seventh led to leaked shots.

"I was playing really well and was 12-under par at one stage. It's disappointing to finish at two-under, but I am happy that I managed to reach eight-under par. The conditions were quite difficult out there with the wind," said Hague.

Schwartz, who is looking for his first win on the MENA Tour,

was rewarded for his patience with two birdies in his last two holes – the eighth and ninth – both playing very difficult in the wind.

"It was a tough day and I just tried to remain patient. It was a good finish with the two birdies and I am looking forward to tomorrow. Getting into contention is the main thing in golf and if I am within one or two shots of the leader tomorrow going into the back nine, I will be happy and give it my best shot," said Schwartz, who is a member of the Challenge Tour.

Journey to Jordan leader David Langley made successive eagles on the ninth and 10th holes after making a double bogey on the second hole and was in the group at five-under par.

## Lucas Martins returns, meets Rakhman Makhazhiev at BRAVE CF 35 in Brazil

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Former BRAVE CF Lightweight World Champion and Featherweight contender Lucas "Mineiro" Martins is set to make his much-anticipated return to the BRAVE CF cage. Mineiro is another major addition to the stacked BRAVE CF 35 fight card, scheduled to take place in Balneário Camboriú, Brazil, on March 28th.

Mineiro's opponent in the upcoming Lightweight match will be Russia's Abdul-Rakhman Makhazhiev. "Soulman", as he's also known as, is coming of a successful debut at BRAVE CF, last December, in Kyrgyzstan, when he beat Sanzhar Azhibayev via submission in the very first round. In his professional career, Markhazhiev boasts a record of nine wins and five losses.



Lucas Martins holds a professional record of 20 wins and

only five losses. The striking artist is returning to a 3-round

match after spending two years challenging and defending World Titles in 5-round marathons. In his last appearance, in July, 2019, Lucas was defeated by Featherweight World Champion Bubba Jenkins in London, England.

BRAVE CF 35 will take place on March 28th, 2020 in Balneário Camboriú and marks the fifth time the fastest-growing MMA organization in the world hosts an event in Brazil. The country will become the number one home of BRAVE Combat Federation alongside the Kingdom of Bahrain. The show, the first promoted by the Bahrain-based promotion outside of Curitiba and Belo Horizonte in Brazil, is headlined by Cleiton "Predator" making the first defense of his Lightweight title against Sweden's Guram Kutateladze.

## Riffa defeat Jordan's Al Jazeera for first AFC Cup win



Riffa's Haram, no. 14, celebrates after scoring their opening goal yesterday

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Bahrain league champions Riffa defeated Al Jazeera of Jordan 2-0 last night in their Group D clash of the 2020 AFC Cup, played at Amman International Stadium.

Ali Haram and Mohammed Salih Soulah were the scorers for the victors.

Haram gave them a dream start with a goal in the seventh minute, while Soulah applied the nail in the coffin in the second minute of second-half stoppage time.

The result gave Riffa three points from two matches. They had earlier bowed to Qadsia SC of Kuwait 1-2 in their previous game.

Haram scored with a header after Jazeera goalkeeper Nouredin Zaid punched a cross away, only for it to be sent into the net by the Bah-

rains international.

That was enough to give Riffa the lead heading into the break.

In the second half, Jazeera pushed hard to find an equaliser, but their efforts were largely off target. Ahmed Abdelhalim tried his luck from distance at the hour mark, but goalkeeper Sayed Alawi was alert to the threat and made the save.

Soulah then came on as a substitute with just a quarter-hour remaining and he pput the match to rest with a deflected shot that left goalkeeper Zaid wrong-footed.

Riffa play Dhofar Club of Oman in their next game, scheduled to take place on March 9 at home.

They are one of two Bahraini clubs in the AFC Cup. The others are Manama in Group A.

## Qualifiers of Strongest GCC Man held in Dubai

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The Organising Committee of the Strongest GCC Man has held the fourth round of the qualifiers in Dubai. This comes after the qualifiers took place in Bahrain, Saudi and Kuwait with Dubai as the fourth stop. Dubai's qualifiers were organised at Sport Time GYM and witnessed wide-scale participation from sportspeople in the country.

The event featured three competitions including torso lifting, farmer walk and car lifting. It's worth noting that the finals will take place in Bahrain in April under the patronage of



A participant in action during the event

HH Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa, First Deputy President of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports, and Bahrain Olympic Committee President. The championship is part of

HH Shaikh Khalid's sport and humanitarian initiatives. The funds that will be raised in the event will be dedicated to supporting cancer patients.

"We have designed a plan to

make the event a huge success in line with the vision of HH Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa. This is the first time we expand this prestigious championship by covering other GCC countries as we aim to bolster the friendly ties among the people of this region," Mohammed Abdulmalik, President of the Coordination and Follow-up Committee, said.

"We want to form meaningful partnerships in bodybuilding and fitness sports and contribute to supporting young GCC sportspeople who are practicing these sports," he added.

The last stop for the qualifiers will be Oman on March 7, 2020.