

## Bahrain rue missed chances at world championship



Bahrain's Mohammed Mirza in action during their game against Japan  
TDT | Manama

Bahrain head coach Halldor Johann Sigfusson rued the national team's missed opportunities in their historic campaign in the 27th IHF World Men's Handball Championship in Egypt.

The Bahrainis made it to the competition's main round for the first time in four appearances, but Sigfusson felt they wrapped up their campaign in disappointing fashion.

"I feel let down, we made so many mistakes," said Sigfusson following their 25-29 loss to Japan on Monday night in their final game of the tournament.

The result gave them a winless record in five matches in the main stage, and it put them in 21st place overall out of 32 teams to end this year's worlds.

The Icelandic tactician added: "We couldn't come back from the first period's deficit in a game that was crucial for our ranking."

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HALLDOR JOHANN SIGFUSSON

Bahrain player Ali Eid mirrored his coach's sentiments. He stated that the reason for the loss was wrong decision making.

"We took rash decisions in the first period," he said of their game against Japan. "We tried to get back but it was too late."

"We didn't prepare for the tournament well enough because of COVID-19, but we will do our best in the Olympics."

Bahrain is set to make its first-ever appearance in men's handball at the Summer Olympic Games later this year, making for their second major competition of 2021.

Bahrain's previous best at the worlds was 20th at the 2019 edition, which featured only 24 teams.

# Ahli edge past Hala in overtime

Defending champions end game with decisive 7-3 run to claim eighth win in Zain Bahrain Basketball League

● **Maitham Jameel and Robert Upshaw pace Ahli attack with 23 points apiece**

● **Manama keep winning ways alive with convincing victory against Al Ettihad**

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Defending champions Al Ahli battled past Al Hala 79-72 in overtime last night in the 2020/2021 Zain Bahrain Basketball League.

Maitham Jameel buried a three-pointer with 16 seconds remaining to ice the win and cap a 7-3 run with which the victors closed out the contest.

Earlier in regulation, Sayed Kadhem Majed made a three-pointer to tie the proceedings at 66-all with a minute to go, and then both he and Ahli captain Mohammed Qurban split charity shots towards the end, setting the stage for the extra session.

With the result, Ahli improved to an 8-2 win-loss record, while Hala dropped to 6-4.

Jameel, who was playing in his first game back after missing several ties due to injury, was joint-leading scorer for Ahli along with American professional Robert Upshaw. They each finished with 23 points apiece, while Jameel fired in four three-pointers, grabbed



Manama's Ali Hussain goes for a lay-up in their win against Al Ettihad

eight rebounds and registered four steals, and Upshaw took down 14 boards while blocking four shots.

Qurban and Ahmed Aldurazi added eight points apiece in the low-scoring affair.

For Hala, Majed was their leading man with 20 points. Canadian Keanau Post had a monster effort of 18 points, 26 rebounds and four blocks, but it

was not enough for a Hala win.

Ahli took a slim 19-18 lead after the opening period but Hala were able to head into the break up by one, 41-40. Ahli took control in the third and had a 56-50 advantage heading into the final canto, but Hala managed to claw their way back and force overtime.

In yesterday's other game, Manama maintained their pris-



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tine record with a 111-86 victory over Al Ettihad.

Manama took a 26-13 lead at the end of the first quarter and never looked back. They roared ahead by as many as 35 and did not allow Ettihad to find their way back into the contest.

The victors enjoyed a balanced attack in the win, with six players finishing in double-figures.

Ammar Mohammed Shabaan and Ali Hussain were the leading scorers, with both coming off the bench. Shabaan had 18 while Hussain scored 17.

Skipper Mohammed Hussain chipped in with 13, Ahmed Salman and Hasan Nowrooz both added 12, while Mohammed Jassim scored 10.

Hassan Albosta had 25 to pace Ettihad.

Manama claimed their ninth win with the result, while Ettihad suffered their seventh loss in 10 games.

League action continues on Saturday.

## Basketball fans remember Kobe Bryant on first anniversary of tragic crash

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Bahrain's basketball-loving community were united yesterday in remembering the late Kobe Bryant, as the world marked the first anniversary of his tragic passing—along with his daughter Gianna and seven others—in a helicopter crash.

Kobe remains one of the NBA's biggest stars, and is a fan-favourite around the globe. To this day, his immense legacy lives on.

This is no different in the Kingdom, where the local basketball community continues to grow.

Muharraq Club star Bader Abdulla Malabes, who has been a die-hard Kobe fan since his rookie season, said yesterday: "It's been one year now since the death of Kobe Bryant. Like everyone else, I couldn't believe it at first, but when it started to sink in, it hit me so hard. It's like someone I know, someone close to me, just disappeared from this world."

"To me, he meant so much, especially basketball-wise, I've been following him since he entered the league. He's the 'GOAT' (Greatest of All Time) for me."

Bryant, also popularly known



Bryant ... missed

by his nickname the "Black Mamba", is a much-beloved figure, not only in the game of basketball but off the court as well.

While he was most admired for his ruthless 'Mamba Mentality' as a player, he was also a loving family man to his wife Vanessa and their four daughters.

"On this day last year, I said Kobe's mentality was a lifestyle, and that continues," said Ahmed Dadi. "Mamba Mentality" for life. Rest in peace, Kobe and Gigi."

Faten Amin and Maria Elisha Esmeralda share these sentiments, and paid heart-felt tributes to the global star.



**Kobe Bryant played 20 seasons in the NBA, from 1996 to 2016. He won five championships, two Finals MVPs, and one regular season MVP. He was an 18-time All-Star and was named on the All-NBA First Team 11 times. He also won two Olympic gold medals for the US**

"It's been a year since you've been gone, yet you continue to have a positive impact and inspire us every day," said Faten. "We really miss you and wish you were here."

Maria Elisha added: "Kobe taught us so many things; he taught us perseverance, hard work and passion. But most of all, he told us to be humble as a person. Kobe, we miss you and we love you, and we hope you are taking care of Gigi up there."

## Nadal takes veiled swipe at Djokovic over quarantine complaints

AFP | Melbourne

Rafael Nadal has taken an apparent swipe at Novak Djokovic over his requests for quarantined players preparing for the Australian Open, saying not everyone felt the need to "advertise" how they were trying to help.

The Serbian world number one issued a list of suggestions to Tennis Australia last week on behalf of 72 players unable to leave their Melbourne hotel rooms after Covid-19 cases were detected on their planes to Australia.

They reportedly included moving players into private homes with tennis courts and getting them better meals.

But his requests fell on deaf ears, while Australian media portrayed players as petulant and selfish and fellow star Nick Kyrgios called Djokovic a "tool".

Djokovic later issued an open letter to say his "good intentions for my fellow competitors in Melbourne have been misconstrued".

"We all try to help each other," Spanish great Nadal told ESPN yesterday from Adelaide, where he and Djokovic are



Rafael Nadal (R) and Novak Djokovic talk prior to their final match of 2020 French Open (file photo)

**We all try to help each other. Some need to make public everything they do to help others. Others... do it in a more private way without having to publish or advertise everything we're doing**

RAFAEL NADAL

quarantining ahead of the year's opening Grand Slam in Mel-

bourne on February 8.

"Some need to make public everything they do to help others," he added, in remarks widely seen as referring to Djokovic. "Others... do it in a more private way without having to publish or advertise everything we're doing."

While most players are undergoing a mandatory 14 days of quarantine in Melbourne, Nadal, Djokovic and other superstars of the game including Serena Williams and Naomi Osaka jetted into Adelaide, where they are due to play an exhibition on Friday.