

East Riffa, Hala stay in premier league

Twelve team line-up complete for next season's Nasser bin Hamad Bahrain Premier Football League

● **Stoppage-time goal from Hussain Al Khayyat salvages draw for East Riffa against A'ali**

● **Yahya Ahmed Anfahi scores match's lone goal in Hala's victory against Al Ittifaq**

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East Riffa and Al Hala last night retained their places in next season's Nasser bin Hamad Bahrain Premier Football League.

East Riffa kept their spot following a late 1-1 draw with A'ali in their match played at the Khalifa Sports City Stadium in Isa Town, while Hala maintained their position after defeating Al Ittifaq 1-0 at the Al Ahli Club Stadium in Mahooz.



East Riffa's Sami Al Hussaini looks to dribble past A'ali's Mauricio Osmar Rodrigues Britto during their match last night

The four squads faced one another in league format, with yesterday's games marking the end of these relegation play-offs.

As the top two on the standings, East Riffa and Hala stay in the top flight for the 2023/2024

campaign, while Ittifaq and A'ali will compete in the Kingdom's second division.

In East Riffa's draw with A'ali, the match had a dramatic ending when East Riffa's Hussain Al Khayyat scored in the third min-



East Riffa, Al Hala, Al Ittifaq and A'ali all faced one another in league format, with last night's games marking the end of the relegation play-offs

ute of second-half stoppage time to salvage the share of the points. Al Khayyat fired in a rocket from the edge of the penalty area to the top-right corner of goal—a crucial strike that helped them keep their place in the premier division.

Earlier in the contest, Sunday Divine Abalo scored for A'ali in the 73rd minute. He stole pos-

Relegation Play-offs Standings

	P	W	D	L	+/-	Pts
East Riffa	3	1	2	0	2	5
Al Hala	3	1	2	0	1	5
Al Ittifaq	3	1	0	2	-2	3
A'ali	3	0	2	1	-1	2

session away from East Riffa's Obus Prince Aggreh, and then sent home a low effort from outside the penalty area, hitting the ball just well enough to beat goalkeeper Eyad Nasser Salem.

With the result, East Riffa went to five points on the relegation play-offs table for first place, while A'ali stayed last amongst the four teams with just two points.

Meanwhile, in Hala's win over Ittifaq, Yahya Ahmed Anfahi was on target in the 14th minute from the face of goal, and his effort was enough to separate the two sides after 90 minutes.

Anfahi received a long cross from the left flank by Hala skipper Ali Adnan, and after the ball went uncleared, Anfahi made no mistake with his effort, shooting into the roof of the net.

Hala went to five points on the standings, level with East Riffa but with a lesser goal-difference.

Ittifaq stayed on three points and just missed out on promotion.

For next season, East Riffa, Hala and second division champions Al Najma along with runners-up Busaiteen are in the Nasser bin Hamad Bahrain Premier Football League. They join this season's champions Al Khaldiya, Manama, Muharraq, Riffa, Sitra, Al Ahli, Hidd and Al Shabab to complete the 12-club roster.

Bahrain Club and Budaiya were sent down to the lower tier as the bottom two clubs from this past season, joining Ittifaq and A'ali who stay in the second division.

Salwa claims double victory in Miami meeting

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Bahrain's former world champion Salwa Eid Naser claimed an impressive double victory at the Tropical Park Meet #2 event held in Miami, Florida in the US early yesterday morning, Bahrain time.

Salwa competed in four races at the meeting, winning two of them. The elite sprinter triumphed in both the women's 200 metres and 400 metres, while finishing second and then fourth in a pair of 100 metre runs.

Salwa won her 200m race in



Salwa Eid Naser

a time of 22.90 seconds. She finished ahead of Fiordaliza Cofil

of the Dominican Republic in 23.20s, while Aiyanna Stiverne of Canada came third in 23.41s.

The 25-year-old Bahraini also won her 400m race, clocking a mark of 50.32s. She again finished ahead of Cofil, who finished in 51.13s, while Stephanie Davis of the US finished third in 52.83s.

Meanwhile, in the 100m, Salwa first finished second in her heat in 11.60s, narrowly behind Cofil who won in 11.44s.

Both runners advanced to the final, where Salwa was classified fourth in 11.54s. Maia Mc-

Coy of the US was the victor in 11.31s, followed by Cofil in 11.37s and Jasmine Abrams of Guyana in 11.47s.

Salwa was the lone Bahraini competing in the Miami event, which was a Challenger-level meeting on the World Athletics Continental Tour. It was only her fourth competition of the outdoor athletics season, in which Salwa is getting ready for the World Athletics Championships in Budapest this August, and the Hangzhou Asian Games in China this September and October.

Bahrain to host Asian futsal qualifying group



Bahrain in action at last year's AFC Futsal Asian Cup (File photo)

● **Matches scheduled to take place in October, with participation nations still to be determined**

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Bahrain is set to host its group matches in qualification for the 2024 AFC Futsal Asian Cup.

This was announced yesterday by the Bahrain Football Association (BFA) after it received confirmation from the Asian Football Confederation (AFC).

The qualifiers are scheduled to be held from October 2 to 13.

The Kingdom is one of the host venues for the eight groups in qualifying. The teams in each group have yet to be determined. The draw is scheduled to take place on June 22 at the AFC House in Kuala Lumpur.

The Bahrainis are one of 31 teams set to compete in the

qualifiers. The eight group winners will earn automatic berths in the AFC Futsal Asian Cup, along with the seven best-ranked runners-up and the host national team.

The BFA recently signed Brazilian Rafael Fogageiro as head coach of the national futsal team. The 42-year-old has about 20 years' experience in leading several futsal clubs in his home country and elsewhere.

Bahrain will be aiming to qualify for the AFC Asian Cup for only the fourth time in its history. The hosts of next year's event have yet to be determined.

The nationals previously also played in the 2002, 2018 and 2022 tournaments, with their best finish in the 2018 event in Taiwan where they reached the quarter-finals.

The competition also acts as the qualification for the FIFA Futsal World Cup, with five teams from the AFC booking a berth in the global competition, also to be held next year in September and October.

Muharraq face must-win in qualifier

● **Bahrainis down 0-2 on aggregate heading into second leg against Tunisia's Union Sportive Monastirienne (USM) in second qualification round for 2023 King Salman Club Cup**

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Bahrain's Muharraq Club have named an 18-player squad for their return match against Tunisian outfit Union Sportive Monastirienne (USM) this evening in the second qualification round for a berth in the 2023 King Salman Club Cup—the region's top tournament organised by the Union of Arab Football Associations, also known as the Arab Club Champions Cup.

The Bahrainis face a tough challenge in the contest, being down 0-2 on aggregate following their loss in the first leg held in Tunis just over a week ago.

Tonight's clash will be held at



Muharraq players during training this week

the Shaikh Ali bin Mohammed Al Khalifa Stadium in Arad. It is scheduled for a 7pm kick-off.

Muharraq's squad for the clash includes goalkeepers Sayed Mohammed Jaafar, Ashraf Waheed and Mohammed

Suleiman.

The rest of the team features Mohammed Al Banna, Ahmed Rabea, Waleed Al Hayyam, Amine Hasan, Hamza Al Jibn, Abdulla Al Khalasi, Abdulwahab Ali, Moses Atede, Omar

Saber, Mubarak Mohammed, Abdulwahab Al Malood, Sufyan Mahrouq, Ahmed Al Sherooqi, Abdulla Al Haiki and Muhammad Sulumba.

Muharraq have been preparing for the game over the past few weeks. A loss in the match-up would make them the second Bahraini team to be booted out of the tournament, following in the footsteps of Manama, who lost in the first qualifying phase against Al Hilal Omdurman of Sudan.

Twelve teams remain in this second phase of qualification, which will determine the six teams that will move on to the group stage. Ten squads have already entered the King Salman Club Cup directly, including champion clubs from Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia.

The tournament carries a huge prize purse, with the champions pocketing a cool US\$6million. The runners-up get \$2.5million, while the semi-finalists each take home \$200,000 and the quarter-finalists \$150,000 each.