

Najma appoint Abdulrahman Mohammed for Asian campaign



Coach Abdulrahman Mohammed
TDT | Manama

Al Najma have appointed Bahraini coach Abdulrahman Mohammed to lead their first team at the upcoming 28th Asian Men's Club League Handball Championship in Kuwait, replacing Sayed Ali Al Falahi.

The club announced the appointment as part of its preparations for the continental tournament, which will take place in Kuwait City from June 6 to 15 and feature eight of Asia's top clubs competing for the title and a place at the 2026 IHF Men's Club World Championship in Egypt.

Najma face a challenging path after being drawn in Group B alongside hosts Kuwait Sports Club, Saudi Arabia's Al Khaleej Club, and Qatar's Al Arabi SC.

Their campaign begins against Al Khaleej on June 6 before taking on Al Arabi the following day. After a rest day, they conclude the group stage against Kuwait SC on June 9.

Only the top two teams from each group will progress to the semi-finals.

The appointment comes at a pivotal moment for Najma, who were recently eliminated from the race for the 2025-26 Khalid bin Hamad Bahrain Handball League title despite entering the campaign as reigning champions and first seeds.



Departing Najma coach Sayed Ali Al Falahi is set to take charge of newly crowned UAE champions Al Nassr

The club will now turn its full focus to the continental stage, where it hopes to add another chapter to its proud Asian record.

Najma are among Bahrain's most successful clubs in the competition, having won the Asian title twice, in 2017 and 2023, while also recording several podium finishes in previous editions.

Abdulrahman Mohammed arrives with an impressive coaching pedigree, having led Bahrain's national cadet team to a historic gold medal at the 2024 Arab Cadets Handball Championship in Najaf, Iraq. He will now be tasked with guiding Najma through a highly competitive preliminary round as they target a place in the knockout stages and another run at continental glory.

Fernandez surges to shock Italian MotoGP sprint win, Martin breaks Mugello speed record



Raul Fernandez (C) celebrates winning the Sprint race

AFP | Mugello, Italy

Spain's Raul Fernandez caused a major upset by speeding to a shock win in Saturday's sprint race at the Italian MotoGP, while Jorge Martin set a new speed record at Mugello as he chipped away at Marco Bezzecchi's championship lead.

The Aprilia-Trackhouse rider finished over a second ahead of former world champion and fellow Spaniard Mar-

tin at Mugello, claiming his second win in motorcycling's premier class of racing.

Fabio Di Giannantonio, who was fastest in all three practice sessions but started seventh on the grid, was over three seconds back in third.

Fernandez had to battle through the first qualifying session to have a shot at the top grid positions and he impressed again from the front row, where he was sandwiched between Bezzecchi and Martin.

Sitra renew trust in Ali Abdulmajeed

Abdulmajeed played a key role in helping Sitra retain their place in the Nasser bin Hamad Premier League

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Sitra Club have renewed their confidence in head coach Ali Abdulmajeed, confirming he will remain in charge of the first team for the 2026-27 season.

Abdulmajeed played a key



Abdulmajeed (R) at his contract renewal signing

role in helping Sitra retain their place in the Nasser bin Hamad Premier League following a challenging campaign near the bottom of the table.

Sitra sealed their top-flight status on the final day of the season with a 1-0 victory over Al Malkiya at Al Ahli Stadium, a result that ensured their survival in the division.

They finished the domestic season in 8th place with 27 points, avoiding the relegation playoffs, recording 6 wins, 4 draws, and 12 defeats.

Liverpool sack Arne Slot after dismal second season

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Liverpool Football Club have dismissed head coach Arne Slot following a disappointing 2025-26 campaign that saw the team finish fifth in the Premier League with 60 points.

The decision brings an end to the Dutchman's two-year spell at Anfield, which began with immediate success as he guided Liverpool to a Premier League title in his debut season after replacing Jürgen Klopp in 2024.

However, a sharp downturn in form during his second year proved decisive, with the club registering 19 defeats in all competitions and slipping out of the title race early.

Liverpool's ownership, Fenway Sports Group (FSG), alongside sporting director Richard Hughes and chief executive Michael Edwards, concluded that a change was required to reverse



Dutchman Arne Slot

the team's downward trajectory and implement a more aggressive, front-foot style of play.

Despite still securing European qualification, Liverpool finished 25 points behind champions Arsenal, marking their

lowest league points total in a decade.

The club also endured a turbulent season off the pitch, following a record £415m summer transfer window and the tragic loss of forward Diogo Jota,

which heavily impacted the squad environment.

In a statement, FSG acknowledged Slot's achievements, particularly his title-winning debut season, while stressing that the decision was based on the need for a new direction rather than a reflection of his ability.

"The contribution Arne has made to Liverpool FC has been significant and meaningful," the club said, adding that he would "always be welcomed back at Anfield."

Despite early reports suggesting internal support for continuity, Liverpool's hierarchy ultimately opted for change after assessing the club's long-term trajectory following the end of the season. Former Bournemouth manager Andoni Iraola is understood to be among the leading candidates to replace Slot, with discussions reportedly already underway.

Ronaldo leads Portugal charge at sixth World Cup, Diaz shoulders Colombia hopes

AFP | London, United Kingdom

Cristiano Ronaldo heads to a record sixth World Cup blessed with a prodigiously talented group of team-mates as Portugal target glory for the first time on the global stage.

Roberto Martinez's side are strong favourites to progress from Group K where they face DR Congo and tournament debutants Uzbekistan before the tricky test of Colombia.

Ronaldo and long-term rival Lionel Messi are set to make more history by becoming the first players to feature in six World Cups.

But since finishing fourth in Ronaldo's debut tournament in 2006, Portugal have rarely threatened to go all the way despite boasting the highest goalscorer in the history of international football on 143.

Now 41, Ronaldo's presence has been seen as a major factor in Portugal sides not maximising their potential in recent tournaments.

The Al-Nassr forward has failed to score in his last nine matches at the World Cup and Euros combined.

But Martinez has remained fiercely loyal to Ronaldo and with some justification.

He scored in the quarter-final, semi-final and final as Portugal beat Spain on penalties to win the Nations League last year.

Ronaldo also plundered five goals in as many qualifiers before a red card against the Republic of Ireland.

Martinez's reasoning for backing Ronaldo also reveals a lack of other credible options up front.

Paris Saint-Germain pair Vitinha and Joao Neves line up alongside Premier League player of the year Bruno Fernandes and Bernardo Silva.

Diaz now Colombia's star man

Colombia are led by their own ageing national hero in James Rodriguez, 12 years on from the tournament that made him a global superstar.

Despite a nomadic and largely ineffective club career in recent years, James, 34, remains an integral part of the Colombia side which reached the Copa America final two years

ago and finished third in South American qualifying.

Luis Diaz is now the talisman for Los Cafeteros and arrives at the World Cup on the back of the best club season of his career at Bayern Munich.

Colombia tickets have been among the most in demand of any in the tournament and they are sure to be backed by a huge travelling and expat support.

That makes life all the more difficult for Uzbekistan and DR Congo to upset the odds against the two big group favourites.

Manchester City defender Abdulkodir Khusanov is the star name among an Uz-

bekistan squad made up largely of domestically-based players.

However, there is World Cup winning experience on the Uzbek bench in Fabio Cannavaro, who captained Italy to success in 2006.

DR Congo's only previous World Cup experience came 52 years ago, when they were known as Zaire, and left Germany without a point or goal to their name.

A squad containing the likes of Newcastle's Yoane Wissa, Sunderland midfielder Noah Sadiki and West Ham defender Aaron Wan-Bissaka will be targeting at least a first World Cup win.

Sebastian Desabre's side beat both Cameroon and Nigeria in play-offs to earn their place at the tournament.

