

Bahrain gets massive boost for aquatic sports

World Aquatics and Bahrain Olympic Committee announce Centre of Excellence at University of Technology Bahrain

● Elite athletes to have access to the centre to enhance their training capabilities

● Development athletes to receive on-site coaching and educational support

TDT | Manama

World Aquatics and the Bahrain Olympic Committee have announced plans to create a centre of excellence and regional office for aquatic sports in the Kingdom of Bahrain, in partnership with GFH Financial Group and the Bahrain Swimming Federation.

This partnership will see World Aquatics establish its centre at The University of Technology Bahrain (UTB). World Aquatics' elite athletes will have access to the centre, enabling them to enhance their training capabilities.

Development athletes will also have access to the new facility, where they will receive on-site coaching and educational support through World Aquatics' Development programmes.

"World Aquatics could not have asked for better partners than in Bahrain, as demonstrated by our bold plans for a centre of excellence here that will serve as an example to the world," said World Aquatics President Husain Al-Musallam.



From left, Brent Nowicki, Faris Al Kooheji and Hisham Alrayes during the signing of the agreement. Picture by ASHEN THARAKA

"Our high-performance athletes are at their best when they can benefit from the right mix of facilities, coaching and sports science. World Aquatics is determined to ensure that this mix is available to athletes from all our national federations. And we are delighted to include an educational component with the help of the University of Technology Bahrain.

"Aquatic sports are universally important. Both the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 and the World Aquatics Championships Budapest 2022 saw over 180 nations represented. We are grateful to Bahrain and to the hosts of our other development centres for their help in ensuring aquatic athletes everywhere have the chance to fulfil their true potential."

World Aquatics currently has operating development centres in Thanyapura (Thailand), Dakar (Senegal), Cape Town (South

Africa) and Davie (Florida, US).

The plans announced for Bahrain also include new pools capable of hosting events in five of the six World Aquatics sports: swimming, water polo, artistic swimming, diving, and high diving. The sixth sport, open water swimming, is already well-served from Bahrain's beaches.

His Highness Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Supreme Council for Youth and Sports First Deputy Chairman, General Sports Authority Chairman and Bahrain Olympic Committee (BOC) President, is a renowned open water swimmer, having completed the 31.5km swim linking the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with Bahrain, across the Gulf of Bahrain.

"Bahrain is a nation of islands, united by the water that surrounds us," HH Shaikh Khalid said. "With an ever increasing diversity of partnerships, Bahrain continues to be one of the



HH Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa, fourth from right, with other officials at the event

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HH SHAIKH KHALID BIN HAMAD AL KHALIFA

leading sports hubs in the world. We have a very clear understanding of the value of aquatic sports, and we are excited to contribute to the future of World Aquatics, not just for Bahrain but for our region and the world.

"We look forward to hosting leading aquatic athletes from different nations, and to help them achieve their sporting dreams, both as development athletes and as participants in World Aquatics competitions."

"Today we have witnessed a historic agreement where the private sector will fully align with the government's vision of promoting sports tourism in the Kingdom of Bahrain," stated Faris Al Kooheji, Secretary General of the BOC. "GFH could not be more excited to partner on this initiative, which has such importance for the Kingdom of Bahrain and for World Aquatics," said GFH's CEO and UTB Chairman Hisham Alrayes. "The project aligns with GFH and UTB's long-time commitment and ongoing support for the further development and promotion of Bahrain as a leading regional centre for education and sports tourism.

"We look forward to working with World Aquatics and the Bahrain Olympic Committee to create a unique platform to attract aquatic athletes from the region and around the world to gather, train and develop their skills in Bahrain and to support the realisation of their potential in sport alongside that of the Kingdom."

Also present at yesterday's signing ceremony were Secretary General and Deputy Chairperson of the Higher Education Council Dr. Shaikha Rana bint Isa bin Duaij Al Khalifa; World Aquatics executive director Brent Nowicki; Minister of Sport, Arts and Recreation of Zimbabwe Kirsty Coventry, who is an ex-international swimmer, a former Olympic and world champion as well as a world record holder; Greek artistic swimmer and Olympian Evangelia Platanioti; and other officials and guests.

Bahrain Drag Racing Championship set for epic climax in season-finale this weekend at BIC

TDT | Manama

The 2022/2023 Bahrain Drag Racing Championship is set for an epic climax this weekend as Bahrain International Circuit (BIC) hosts the season's fifth and final round from yesterday to Friday in Sakhir.

Intense title battles have been brewing across the series' 13 categories and they will all be settled at this upcoming meeting at "The Home of Motorsport in the Middle East".

BIC's quarter-mile drag strip, a member of the prestigious Worldwide Network of the US-based National Hot Rod Association (NHRA), will host all the heated head-to-head action.

Two nights of Test and Tune kick off the round on Tuesday and Wednesday night. Qualifying will then be held on Thursday, to be followed by Race Day on Friday.

The Bahrain Drag Racing Championship has attracted

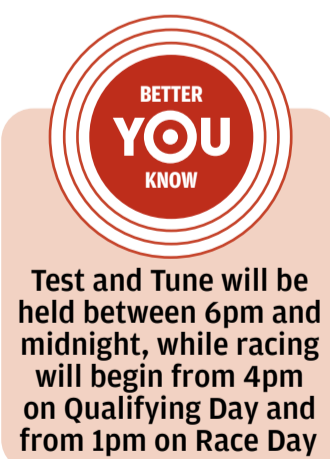


A car in action at BIC

participants from all over the world, competing in classes for both cars and motorbikes. They will be going at it one last time this season for pride, bragging rights and for the prestigious "Wally" trophies—one of the sport's highest honours that are awarded exclusively to champions of NHRA-sanctioned events across the globe.

All are welcome to attend this week's racing and enjoy the region's biggest and best drag racing championship. Tickets are available at the gate or online at bahraingp.com.

Tickets cost BD3 for the Batelco Grandstand for Qualifying and Race Day. For the second night of Test and Tune, tickets are BD2 for the Batelco Grand-

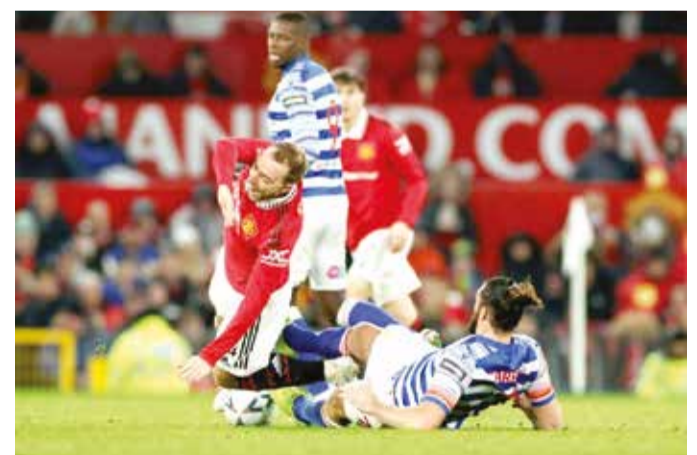


stand.

Test and Tune will be held between 6pm and midnight, while racing will begin from 4pm on Qualifying Day and from 1pm on Race Day.

For more information on the Bahrain Drag Racing Championship or other events and activities at BIC, visit bahraingp.com or call the BIC Hotline on +973-17450000.

Man Utd lose playmaker Eriksen until May



Reading's Andy Carroll in action with Manchester United's Christian Eriksen
AFP | London

Manchester United midfielder Christian Eriksen is likely to be ruled out until early May by an ankle injury he suffered in the FA Cup win over Reading, the club said Tuesday.

Eriksen left Old Trafford on crutches on Saturday after being caught by Reading striker Andy Carroll in the fourth-round tie.

The loss of the 30-year-old

Danish playmaker is a blow for United who lie fourth in the Premier League and in the Champions League qualification places after a good run of form that only ended with the 3-2 defeat by leaders Arsenal on January 22.

United said in a statement: "Christian Eriksen is expected to be out of action for an extended period because of an ankle injury sustained in our FA Cup victory over Reading on Saturday.