

Nasser, Najma claim victories in volleyball league



Muharraq's Hassan Al Haddad goes for a spike against the Al Nasser double block

● **Al Nasser survive late surge from Muharraq in five-set battle**

● **Al Najma cruise in three-set triumph against Nabi Saleh**

TDI | Manama

Al Nasser and Al Najma claimed contrasting victories last night in their round-of-six games of the 2022/2023 Isa bin Rashid Bahrain Volleyball League.

Nasser survived a battling Muharraq 3-2 (25-19, 25-23, 20-25, 22-25, 15-8) while Najma eased past Nabi Saleh 3-0 (25-16, 25-17, 25-23). Both games were played at Isa bin Rashid Arena at the Bahrain Volleyball

Association headquarters at Isa Sports City in Riffa.

Nasser claimed their first victory in this stage of the league. Hussain Mahdi played a key role for the winners, scoring 14 points, including five in the decisive fifth set. Ebrahim Mohammed was the team's leading scorer with 19 points.

For Muharraq, Hassan Al Haddad had a game-high 23 in the loss. Nigerian Samuel Anthony Ogwuche added 17 markers while Hussain Khalifa scored 15.

Meanwhile, Najma posted their second triumph in the round-of-six at the expense of Nabi Saleh.

Hassan Dhahi had 13 points as one of the top performers for Najma, who also got 18 markers from Ali Ebrahim. Peter Camara from Kenya had 27 points to pace Nabi Saleh in the defeat while Sayed Hashem Isa chipped in with 17.

Loeb makes intentions clear in Dakar Rally

French star shines for Bahrain Raid Xtreme as Sainz takes stage win in Saudi

● **Loeb just 23 seconds away from Sainz**

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Sebastien Loeb believes this could be the year that he leads Bahrain Raid Xtreme to victory in the Dakar Rally, and he underlined his intentions yesterday on the first real test of the 45th edition in Saudi Arabia. The nine-time World Rally Champion is nicely placed in second position following the 367-km opening special stage, just 23 seconds away from stage winner Carlos Sainz, with two other Prodrive Hunters in the top seven.

Partnered by Fabian Lurquin in his BRX Hunter, Loeb finds himself in between Audi teammates Sainz and Mattias Ekström, but has strong support close at hand following a stage on which the five quickest drivers were separated by just over two minutes.

Loeb said, "It was a good step for us at this stage, no problem. I was very safe from the beginning from the punctures. It was



Sebastien Loeb at the wheel of his Bahrain Raid Xtreme Prodrive Hunter

really rough with big stones, and I wanted to try to avoid a puncture. So that's what we did."

Winners of the Rallye du Maroc in October, Guerlain Chicherit with co-driver Alex Winocq set the fifth fastest time in their Prodrive Hunter, just five seconds adrift of Saudi's Yazeed Al Rajhi in a Toyota.

Loeb's BRX team-mates, Orly Terranova and Alex Haro, took their Prodrive Hunter to seventh place, one ahead of Qatar's four-times winner and defending champion, Nasser Al Attiyah.

It all added up to a highly satisfying leg for the Prodrive-run BRX team in Saudi, which has 67 people, 14 nationalities and 27 vehicles supporting the Hunters, each running on EcoPower fuel which reduces greenhouse gas emissions by 80% compared to petrol.

After edging Loeb by one second on the previous day's prologue, Ekström led for much of yesterday's stage before the Frenchman stepped up the pace in his Prodrive Hunter, as did Sainz, to surge past him over the last 100kms.



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The performance of the Prodrive Hunters is no surprise following back-to-back victories in last year's inaugural World Rally Raid Championship (W2RC).

Following up Chicherit's historic first rally success for the car in Morocco, Loeb gave BRX a splendid win in the Andalusia Rally, and has started the 2023 W2RC in Saudi determined to go one better than his overall runner up spot last year.

The Dakar continues tomorrow with a 430km stage from Sea Camp to Alula.

BIC signs on with Unipal to offer Bahrain's students fantastic deals

TDI | Manama

Bahrain International Circuit (BIC) announced yesterday that it has partnered with popular student-centric platform Unipal to offer special deals on event tickets, activities and merchandise at "The Home of Motorsport in the Middle East".

Through its free mobile app, Unipal gives students across the Kingdom access to all kinds of offers and discounts to over 150 establishments across Bahrain using a unique digital ID.

BIC's collaboration with Unipal thus offers Bahrain's youth a series of incredible offers on the various offerings at the circuit, making for significant savings!

The partnership was formalised in a signing ceremony attended by BIC Chief Executive Shaikh Salman bin Isa Al Khalifa, BIC Chief Commercial Officer Sherif Al Mahdy, and Unipal Operations Director Ali Alshaer.

BIC Chief Commercial Officer Sherif Al Mahdy commented: "We are pleased to be launching



BIC Chief Executive Shaikh Salman bin Isa Al Khalifa and Unipal Operations Director Ali Alshaer after signing the agreement

our partnership with Unipal to be able to deliver to students across Bahrain great deals on the events, activities and merchandise we offer at BIC.

"Our collaboration gives us a wider reach to the Kingdom's youth, who make up a large portion of our customers and fan

base.

"We look forward to working closely with Unipal for the long term and to further build our relationship for the benefit of both our companies."

Amongst BIC's deals that are available to students on Unipal is a 10 per cent discount on tickets

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BIC CHIEF COMMERCIAL OFFICER SHERIF AL MAHDY

to the Formula 1 Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix 2023, as well as 10 per cent price reductions on the wide array of on-track activities such as the Orange Media Open Track, the Ebrahim K Kano Drag and Drift Nights, the BNI Clio Clio Cup Experience or the Batelco Fitness on Track.

Students will also be able to purchase tickets to the first-ever Bahrain Darts Masters, taking

place on 12 and 13 January featuring the world's best players in the PDC World Series of Darts.

Furthermore, BIC and Unipal have created a special account catered specifically to Bahrain International Karting Circuit (BIKC), BIC's world-class grassroots motorsport facility.

With karting being an immensely popular adrenaline-pumping activity amongst Bahrain's youth, students can take advantage of the discounted rates and enjoy a thrilling motor racing experience at BIKC.

The complete list of offers available to students at BIC and BIKC can be found on the Unipal app.

Unipal currently has over 25,000 university students, which is 45 per cent of the student population in Bahrain, who are registered on the app, with an average of around 1,200 more joining every month.

For more information, visit bahraingp.com or call the BIC Hotline on +973-17450000.

Lampard pleased with character and fight of Everton



Frank Lampard

Reuters | London

Everton boss Frank Lampard believes the "character, determination and fight" which his team exhibited in their 1-1 draw with Premier League champions Manchester City on Saturday is an example they need to follow going forwards.

His side had gone a goal down after Erling Haaland opened the scoring for City in the first half but came away with a point thanks to Demarai Gray's spectacular effort from a distance.

With 11 minutes of time added on in the second half, his side defended resolutely to guard themselves from relentless waves of City attacks.

"For me I think, particularly at City, it's character, personality and flight (which is the most important element of the game) because it's 11 against 11 and we know how good their 11 is," Lampard told a news conference.

Auger-Aliassime says winning momentum has boosted confidence

Reuters | London

Felix Auger-Aliassime said his superb form in the second half of last year has left him full of confidence for 2023, as the world number six gears up for the new season as part of a heavyweight field in the Adelaide International

1 tournament.

Canadian Auger-Aliassime, 22, captured titles in Florence, Antwerp and Basel with a 13-match winning run in October before reaching the semi-finals of the Paris Masters and competing in the ATP Finals.

He also guided Canada to their

first Davis Cup title late in November, beating Alex de Minaur, Lorenzo Musetti and Oscar Otte at the Finals in Malaga, Spain.

"I feel like momentum plays a huge role on your confidence. For me, it's been great in the last few months," Auger-Aliassime told reporters.

"I try to recreate it, not just like think it's some sort of stars aligned or some type of luck you're just trying to ride a wave on. I think there's reasons behind success.

"I feel like it's about understanding why you're succeeding constantly and trying to do it again."



Felix Auger-Aliassime