

Dar Kulaib defeat Muharraq in volleyball league



Dar Kulaib's Juan Barrera and Hasan Alaiwi team up for a double block against the attack of Muharraq's Samuel Anthony Ogwuche

TDT | Manama

Dar Kulaib continued their winning ways in the 2022/2023 Isa bin Rashid Bahrain Volleyball League last night following a well-deserved 3-1 (25-12, 23-25, 25-15, 25-21) victory over Muharraq in their round-of-six clash.

The game took place at Isa bin Rashid Arena at Isa Sports City in Riffa. It was part of the second phase of the league's six-team playoffs, which is being played in double round-robin format. The top four at the end of these fixtures move on to the league's semi-finals.

Dar Kulaib improved to a 7-2 win-loss record and have one game remaining in this round. Muharraq suffered their sixth loss and also have one last fix-

ture before the final four.

Both teams appear to be headed for a berth in that stage, along with Al Najma (7-1) and Al Ahli (6-2), while Al Nasser 2-6 have an uphill climb in their semis quest and Nabih Saleh have already been eliminated (0-8).

Leading the way for Dar Kulaib last night were Argentinian professional Juan Barrera, along with Bahraini stars Mohammed Yaqoob, Ali Habib, Mahmoud Abdulwahed, libero Hussain Sultan, Ayman Isa, and others.

For Muharraq, their top players of Nigerian Samuel Anthony Ogwuche, Abbas Ehsan, Hussain Khalifa, Hassan Al Haddad and Sayed Ali Mohammed, put in valiant efforts, but could not save them from defeat.

HH Shaikh Isa bin Salman Chairs REHC High Committee Meeting

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His Highness Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Chairman of the Rashid Equestrian and Horse Racing Club (REHC) High Committee, yesterday chaired a meeting of the REHC High Committee.

HH Shaikh Isa bin Salman highlighted the unwavering support of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, for the development of the Kingdom's horse racing sector.

HH Shaikh Isa bin Salman expressed his gratitude to HRH the Crown Prince and Prime Minister for his patronage of the 2023 Crown Prince's Cup and emphasised that His Royal Highness's support is a motivation to continue advancing the horse racing sector.

His Highness was briefed on the REHC's organisation of a series of races, including His Majesty the King's Cup and the Nation-



HH Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa

al Action Charter Cup. In this regard, His Highness emphasised the importance of ensuring the success of the upcoming races.

HH Shaikh Isa bin Salman commended the REHC staff's efforts towards achieving the Club's development programmes and goals and noted their expertise in managing and organising regional and international races.

His Highness emphasised the importance of developing plans and strategies to support Bahraini jockeys, trainers, and stable owners, as well as working to implement innovative initiatives to contribute to the Kingdom's longstanding equine heritage.

The REHC High Committee also reviewed several priority strategic projects and developments in the governance and sustainability of its various operations.

His Highness concluded by reiterating the importance of delivering the Club's approved plans and priorities to support the Kingdom's ever-growing horse racing sector.

Gakpo might have moved too early to Liverpool says Dutch coach Koeman

AFP | London

Liverpool's new Netherlands international signing Cody Gakpo is struggling to find his feet and might have made the move to the Premier League too early, his new national team coach Ronald Koeman said.

The 23-year-old Gakpo moved to Liverpool from PSV Eindhoven last month but in six starts he has yet to score.

Koeman said it was good to have young Dutch players moving to bigger leagues but it could also be difficult for them.

"The level in England is higher than in the Netherlands, but they are also young boys, aren't they? Like (Ryan) Gravenberch going to Bayern (Munich) and not playing. Then that is difficult," he said on a YouTube



Liverpool's Cody Gakpo in action with Chelsea's Trevoh Chalobah

show hosted by former footballer Andy van der Meide.

Koeman said the fact that Liverpool were struggling did not benefit Gakpo's game.

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away. And if you don't score or you're not important and you don't win any matches, it's very difficult, especially for a young player. If that's someone aged 28 with experience, it would be different," Koeman added.

The new Dutch coach, who began his second stint in charge on Jan. 1, said he was keeping a keen eye on all Dutch exports as he considers his first selection for March's kick off of the Euro-2024 qualifiers.

Rohit, Cummins play down pitch chatter ahead of first Test

Rohit Sharma asks media to focus needs on the match and not the pitch in Nagpur

● **Cummins says Australia's batters would take the pitch in their stride**

AFP | Nagpur

India skipper Rohit Sharma and Australian counterpart Pat Cummins yesterday brushed aside concerns about the pitch ahead of the first of four eagerly awaited Tests.

Australian commentators have said that a bone-dry pitch has been prepared in Nagpur to make life difficult for the visitors' many left-handed batsmen in the match starting Thursday.

Cricketer writer Robert Craddock told broadcaster SEN that if parts of the pitch had been prepared specifically to target Australia's left-handed batsmen, it would amount to "straight-up pitch doctoring".

Former Australia all-rounder Simon O'Donnell said the International Cricket Council "should step in and do something about



Australia's captain Pat Cummins (R) speaks with his Indian counterpart Rohit Sharma next to the trophy

it, if they think it's not right".

But Cummins told reporters that Australia's batters would take the pitch in their stride.

"Potentially, it looks a little bit dry for the left-handers and knowing how much traffic will probably go through there from the right-arm bowlers," said Cummins.

"It might be a fair bit of rough out there. Again that's some-

thing we just got to embrace. It's going to be fun, it's going to be challenging at times, but we have batters who relish the chance to problem solve on their feet."

Australia's set of key left-handers includes David Warner, Usman Khawaja, Alex Carey, Matt Renshaw and Travis Head.

Their right-handers include Steve Smith -- who scored three centuries including a brilliant

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ROHIT SHARMA

178 during Australia's 2017 tour of India -- and Marnus Labuschagne, currently number one in the ICC Test rankings.

Cummins said that getting a good first-innings lead in India was more important than anywhere else in the world.

"You just got to find a way to put a big total on the board, especially thinking if it's going to spin, it's going to get really hard in the second innings," the fast bowler said.

'Not bothered'

Indian skipper Sharma also downplayed concerns about the

YOU KNOW WHAT
Australia last won a Test series in India in 2004 and India have won the teams' last three encounters, including twice in Australia

pitch, saying that the "focus is on playing the game".

"(In the) last series we played here, a lot was spoken about pitches. All 22 (players) are quality cricketers and not bothered about how much it is turning, how much it is seaming and all that."

India are likely to field three spinners, including Ravichandran Ashwin and the returning Ravindra Jadeja, but Sharma did not reveal the starting line-up.

Cummins confirmed that

Australia would be without injured pacers Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Starc as well as all-rounder Cameron Green.

Foreign teams have often struggled to overcome conditions in India, with England thrashed 3-1 in 2021.

Australia last won a Test series in India in 2004 and India have won the teams' last three encounters, including twice in Australia.

A draw in any of the four Tests will be enough to secure world number one Australia a place in the ICC World Test Championship final at The Oval in June.

Second-placed India need to win at least 3-0 to assure themselves of a spot in that final for the second year running.

Indian cricket commentator Harsh Bhogle also brushed aside chatter about the pitch.

"So much talk about pitches before the game starts! For one, it is the same for both teams. And second, it has to present a challenge to the touring side. That is the essence of home and away contests," Bhogle wrote on Twitter.