

# Manama begin title quest

Bahrain champions to battle Kuwait SC tonight in game one of Gulf sub-zone finals in FIBA West Asia Super League

● **Best-of-three finals opener in Kuwait City tips off 8pm, Bahrain time**

● **Manama looking to hand opponents first loss of entire competition**

TDT | Manama

**R**eigning Bahrain champions Manama Club begin their quest tonight to add a new title to their already impressive trophy cabinet when they face off with Kuwait SC in the best-of-three finals of the Gulf sub-zone Manama players during their practice scrimmage last night in preparation for tonight's finals opener

in the 2022/2023 FIBA West Asia Super League (WASL).

Tonight's game is scheduled to tip off at 8pm, Bahrain time, at Shaikh Saad Abdullah Sport Hall Complex in Kuwait City.

Manama punched their tickets to the championship decider after completing a two-game sweep of Al Hilal of Saudi Arabia in their semi-final match-up. Kuwait, on the other hand, defeated Shabab Al Ahli of Dubai in the last four.

Heading into tonight's encounter, Manama's star point guard Lamont Jones from the US says that any player on their team can step up on any given night and help lift them to a victory.

"We have a team of great players," Jones was quoted as saying. "Most of the guys are on the national team. They know how to play. They represent their country, they represent Manama. And I think at any given point anybody can go off, like Mohammed [Ameer], [Ahmed] Haji, [Musta-



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LAMONT JONES

ing swept the six-game group phase, which included two wins against Manama, before taking their semi-final.

Manama conducted their final practice last night in Bahrain prior to their departure for the Kuwaiti capital.

Game two in the finals series is scheduled for May 15 at the Khalifa Sports City Arena in Isa Town. Game three, if needed, will take place May 22 back in Kuwait City.

With their finals berth, Manama are also assured of a place in the WASL Final 8, where they will be joined by champions of South Asia and Central Asia. The WASL Final 8 will qualify for FIBA Asia Champions Cup 2023, on the road to FIBA Intercontinental Cup 2023, FIBA's highest club competition.

The WASL is a new basketball competition sanctioned by FIBA, the sport's global governing body. Manama are one of 16 teams that have taken part in this inaugural edition.



## Verstappen wins Miami Grand Prix

Miami Gardens

**W**orld champion Max Verstappen powered from ninth on the grid to beat team-mate Sergio Perez and extend Red Bull's all-conquering start to the season with victory at the Miami Grand Prix on Sunday.

The win -- Red Bull's fifth from five races this season -- extends Verstappen's lead at the top of the standings to 14 points and follows his triumph in the inaugural Miami race last year.

The 1-2 for Red Bull is their fourth in five races so far this year as the team utterly dominate the sport leaving their rivals to battle for the third podium position.

Aston Martin's Spanish veteran Fernando Alonso took third for his fourth podium in five races this season as he continues to enjoy his late career revival.



(L-R) Red Bull Racing's Mexican driver Sergio Perez, who placed second, Red Bull Racing's Dutch driver Max Verstappen, who placed first, and Aston Martin's Spanish driver Fernando Alonso, who placed third, celebrate on the podium after the 2023 Miami Formula One Grand Prix at the Miami International Autodrome in Miami Gardens, Florida

Verstappen had to work hard for his third victory of the campaign after his disappointing performance in Saturday's qualifying left him in the middle of the grid.

But the speed of the Red Bull car, combined with smart decisions on tyres, meant that the

Dutchman was able to quickly get himself in contention and then produce a late surge to beat his team-mate Perez, who remains second in the standings.

Perez, starting on pole, made the perfect start, racing clear of his rivals but Verstappen, on hard tyres, quickly moved

through the field and took just 15 laps to reach second place behind his team-mate.

Perez pitted on lap 20 allowing Verstappen to take the lead but the Dutchman had to give that up when he went into the pits on lap 46, changing to the medium compound tyres and coming out 1.2 seconds behind.

It took just two laps for Verstappen, who won the inaugural Miami Grand Prix a year ago, to take advantage of his fresher tyres with better grip as, after a brief joust, he overtook the Mexican, on 25-lap-old tyres, to take the lead.

Verstappen's 38th win for Red Bull equals the team record set by Sebastian Vettel and is the first time a driver has won from exactly ninth on the grid since Niki Lauda at the French Grand Prix in 1984.

## Russell, Rinku star as Kolkata win IPL thriller

Kolkata

**A**ndre Russell's blazing 42 and a finishing act by Rinku Singh kept Kolkata Knight Riders in the hunt for the IPL play-offs with a tense final-ball win over Punjab Kings yesterday.

Kolkata looked in trouble at 124-4 while chasing 180 for victory when Russell and Rinku, who hit an unbeaten 21 off 10 balls, put on a destructive partnership of 54 to win by five wickets at their home Eden Gardens.

Russell smashed three sixes off England left-arm quick Sam Curran in the 19th over but got run out on the penultimate delivery with Kolkata needing two off the final ball.

The left-handed Rinku, who smashed five sixes on the final five balls in a match-winning knock for Kolkata last month to become an IPL sensation, hit the winning boundary off Arshdeep Singh.

"I didn't think about the last

ball. Even when I hit those five sixes, I hadn't thought much," said an elated Rinku.

"I was playing on the merit of the ball. I had the belief in me that I could finish the game."

Man of the match Russell said, "When I have Rinku at the other end I am not worried. I have confidence in him. I get goosebumps when I see what he is doing now. I have company at the backend."



**Kolkata jumped from eight to five in the 10-team table led by holders Gujarat Titans as teams jostle for the final four spots to make the play-offs.**

## Messi scoops individual, team Laureus double

Paris

**A**rgentina and Paris Saint Germain veteran star Lionel Messi yesterday scooped a unique double, landing individual and team Laureus awards for his exploits and those of his World Cup winning nation.

Messi, 35, finally landed a first World Cup winners medal in Qatar last December after a thrilling penalty shootout final win over France -- enough to earn him an individual accolade while the seven-time Ballon d'Or winner also accepted the team award at a prestigious Paris ceremony.

The accolade saw Messi, who earned a fine and suspension from PSG for making an unauthorised promotional visit to Saudi Arabia, see off competition notably from clubmate Ky-



Messi poses with his Laureus World Sportsman of the Year award

lian Mbappé, whose World Cup final hat-trick was not enough to earn him glory in Qatar.

Jamaican sprinter Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, who last August earned a fifth world 100m crown at Eugene, Oregon, picked up the female athlete award while US Open tennis champion Car-

los Alcaraz earned the World Breakthrough of the Year award.

Going back to football, Denmark and Manchester United star Christian Eriksen earned a Comeback Award for returning to the top of the European game after collapsing with cardiac arrest during the Euros two years ago. Swiss para-athlete sensation Catherine Debrunner meanwhile picked up the Disability Award after triumphing in her opening two marathons.

The Sport for Good Award was presented to TeamUp -- a programme for children displaced by war -- by Barcelona and Poland star Robert Lewandowski.

Meanwhile, Chinese-American Olympic ski freestyle champion Eileen Gu won the World Action Sports person accolade.

The awards have been made annually since 2000 by a jury comprising 71 members of the Laureus World Sports Academy, representing the past 50 years of athletic excellence.



**The Argentine, who attended the ceremony with wife Antonela Rocuzzo, previously had won the award jointly with British Formula One champion Lewis Hamilton in 2020.**

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