

# Al Najma keep semis hopes alive

Bahrain handball champions defeat San Francisco Calheat from US in IHF Men's Super Globe in Dammam



GROUP D STANDINGS Al Najma's Mujtaba Al Zaimour attempts to attack the Calheat defence

	P	W	D	L	+/-	Pts
Al Najma (Bahrain)	2	1	0	1	6	2
Barlinek Industria Kielce (Poland)	1	1	0	0	1	2
San Francisco Calheat (US)	1	0	0	1	-7	0

● **Mohammed Habib Ahmed scores nine goals, named Player of the Match**

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Bahrain and Asian clubs' champions Al Najma Club yesterday kept their hopes alive of advancing to the semi-finals in the prestigious IHF Men's Super Globe, being held in Dammam, Saudi Arabia.

Najma outclassed the San Francisco Calheat from the US 29-22 to claim their first win in Group D of the competition's preliminary round. They had previously lost by a single goal to Barlinek Industria Kielce of Poland in their first game on Tuesday, but are now in the hunt for a spot in the last four.

They moved to temporary first place on the pool standings with one game to go between the Calheat and Barlinek Industria Kielce. That is scheduled to take place today at 12.15pm, Bahrain time, and it will determine the

final ranking in Group D.

Only the top team in each of the four preliminary round pools move on to the semis. The runners-up go to the fifth-to-eighth place bracket, while the bottom clubs will play in the ninth-to-12th placement games to determine their overall classification.

Najma and the Calheat were engaged in a tight battle in the first half yesterday, with the Bahrainis going ahead by no more than three. They took a 12-9 advantage into the break.

In the final 30 minutes, Najma went on an 8-3 scoring run to go up 20-12, and they never looked back. Their biggest gap from the Calheat was 10 goals, 29-19, when Mahdi Saad converted on a fast-break.

Mohammed Habib Ahmed finished as Najma's leading scorer with nine goals. He was later named the Player of the Match. Saad added six, while Hasan Mirza scored five goals. Belal Basham chipped in with four, while Hassan Madan, Mohammed Ali Abdulredha, Mujtaba Al Zaimour, Saud Al Junaid and Sayed Ali Shubbar all finished with a goal each.

For the Calheat, Felix Raff had seven goals while Benjamin Geisser added four in the losing effort.

Najma are participating in the IHF Super Globe for the second time, following the 2018 edition when they finished seventh. The global competition, organised by the International Handball Federation (IHF), is in its 16th year.



Today's clash between the San Francisco Calheat of the US and Barlinek Industria Kielce of Poland will determine the final rankings in Group D of the preliminary round, and thus decide if Al Najma advance to the final four

## Top seeds march through in ITF tennis

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Top seeds Ariana Gogulina from Kazakhstan and Venkat Rishi Batlanki of the US both barged into their respective quarter-finals yesterday in the Bahrain ITF Juniors 2023 tournament, currently being played at the Bahrain Tennis Federation (BTF) hard courts in Isa Town.

Ariana cruised past Ayris Tokac of Turkey 6-0, 6-0 to make it through to the girls' singles round of eight, while Venkat eased past Sergiy Rafiee of Great Britain 6-0, 6-1 to qualify.

Ariana is next set to take on sixth seed Liliya Piskun in her last eight clash. Other match-ups in that stage pit third seed Sosanne Malak of Egypt against Luisa Fusil of Slovenia, Adiya Omarbek of Kazakhstan against Arina Malygina, and seventh seed Alina Sogomonyan against Simona Cucu of Romania.

Romania.

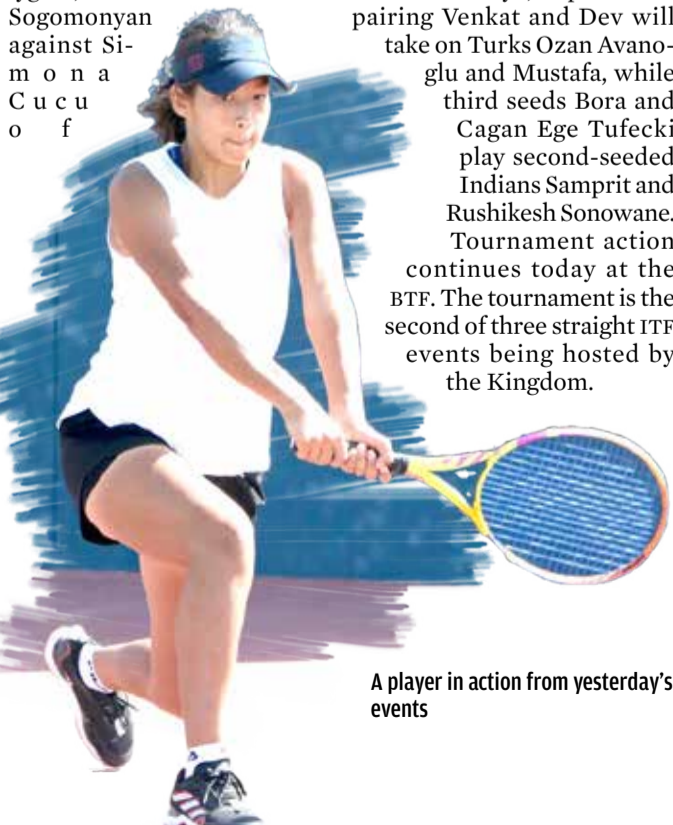
Amongst the boys, Venkat will be facing off with eighth seed Dev Kanbargimath of Romania in the quarter-finals. Dev outclassed Mustafa Ege Topbas of Turkey 6-1, 6-1 in their second-round encounter.

The other head-to-heads are between third seed Samprit Sharma of India and sixth seed Bora Bakici of Turkey, Radu Cojocaru of Australia and Andres Pereiro Lopez of Spain, and fifth seed Josh Hinton of Great Britain and Vishnu Balachandar of the US.

Meanwhile, the boys' and girls' doubles semi-finalists have been determined.

Amongst the girls, Ariana and Adiya, fourth seeds, take on Simona and Emily Lederer of Austria, while Arina and Anastasia Myachina face off with Luisa and Pallavi Patel of India.

For the boys, top-seeded pairing Venkat and Dev will take on Turks Ozan Avanoğlu and Mustafa, while third seeds Bora and Cagan Ege Tufeci play second-seeded Indians Samprit and Rushikesh Sonwane. Tournament action continues today at the BTF. The tournament is the second of three straight ITF events being hosted by the Kingdom.



A player in action from yesterday's events

## Khaldiya draw with Najma in football league

● **Mahdi Abduljabbar scores second-half equaliser for Khaldiya**

● **Struggling Muharraq and Busaiteen play to goalless stalemate**

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Defending champions Al Khaldiya salvaged a 1-1 draw against Al Najma last night in their week six match of the 2023/2024 Nasser bin Hamad Bahrain Premier Football League.

Mohammed Al Rumaihi opened the scoring for Najma in the second minute of first-half additional time. He rolled the ball into the net with a weak shot that was hit just enough,



Al Najma's Edimar Ribeiro Da Costa Junior, left, vies for possession with Al Khaldiya's Abdulla Al Hazza

and it put his team ahead at the half.

But in the 62nd, Khaldiya were level with a Mahdi Abduljabbar strike from close range.

Abduljabbar was on the receiving end of a fine assist from Gleison Wilson Da Silva Moreira Unmarked, he slotted home.

Both teams had other chances

to score, but neither side could convert their chances.

With the result, both Khaldiya and Najma claimed their third draw in six matches and stayed tied on 12 points atop the league table with 12 points. Khaldiya are first with Najma second with a superior goal difference.

In another match last night, Muharraq and Busaiteen played to a goalless stalemate.

Muharraq went to six points while Busaiteen improved to three.

League action continues today and tomorrow. Tonight, Al Hala and Al Shabab face off while Sitra take on Hidd. Tomorrow, a derby will feature with Riffa facing East Riffa, and Manama will be going up against Al Ahli. All games are scheduled for simultaneous 7pm kick-offs.

## BIC set for a fantastic Friday

Batelco Fitness on Track and Orange Media Open Track Night set for tomorrow

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Bahrain International Circuit (BIC), "The Home of Motorsport in the Middle East", hosts tomorrow back-to-back activities both outside of the fast lane and in it.

Taking place from 6am to 10am will be the Batelco Fitness on Track, and then from 4pm to 11pm will be an Orange Media Open Track Night.

Both events are amongst the most popular offerings on the circuit's packed calendar and all interested to join are invited to register today.

Those participating will have the chance to exercise either on foot or on a bicycle within BIC's safe and controlled envi-



Cars in an Open Track event at BIC

ronment.

Tomorrow's activity will be bright and early, making for a pleasant start to the weekend. Runners and walkers will be utilising BIC's 2.550-kilometre Inner Circuit, while cyclists will be able to ride their bikes along the 3.543-kilometre Outer Circuit, with another dedicated area for children's cycling.

The cost to take part is BD2 for cyclists and BD1 for runners.

Children under the age of 12 can participate for free if accompanied by a paying adult.

Meanwhile, the Orange Media Open Track Night offers motorsport enthusiasts the chance to satisfy their need for speed in their very own car or motorbike. Those taking part will get to take their vehicle out for a spin along BIC's 2.55 kilometre Inner Circuit, the same raced on in the Kingdom's top local

championships, while pushing them to their limits within a safe and controlled environment. To add to that, they will get to take in the magnificence of BIC's state-of-the-art floodlights, illuminating the track and creating a brilliant setting.

Following the Orange Media Open Track Night activity from 4pm to 11pm, an hour-long members-only session will take place from 11pm to 12midnight.

Driver etiquette is of ultimate importance in every Orange Media Open Track Night, so there is no close or aggressive overtaking permitted. Overtaking is by invitation between corners and driving is monitored, with poor or dangerous driving being dealt with swiftly by officials.