

Muharraq, Sitra stay in contention in tight title battle



Muharraq's Muhammad Sulumba tries to dribble past the defence of their Budaiya opposition

● Muharraq claim resounding 5-1 win over Budaiya, Sitra outclass East Riffa 2-0

● Only one point separates top four teams in league standings after week 16 play

TDT | Manama

Standings

	P	W	D	L	+/-	Pts
Manama	16	9	4	3	15	31
Muharraq	16	8	6	2	15	30
Al Khaldiya	16	9	3	4	14	30
Sitra	16	8	6	2	10	30
Riffa	16	7	5	4	7	26
Al Ahli	16	5	6	5	-3	21
Al Shabab	16	6	2	8	0	20
Hidd	16	5	4	7	-10	19
Al Hala	16	4	6	6	-3	18
East Riffa	16	4	6	6	-4	18
Bahrain Club	16	3	4	9	-8	13
Budaiya	16	1	2	13	-33	5

Muharraq and Sitra stayed in the ultra-tight title race in the 2022/2023 Nasser bin Hamad Bahrain Premier Football League last night with big wins in their respective games, which wrapped up the 16th week of action.

Muharraq registered a resounding 5-1 victory over bottom-of-the-table Budaiya, while Sitra outclassed East Riffa 2-0.

Their wins helped both sides improve to 30 points on the league table, just one behind solo leaders Manama and tied with Al Khaldiya, while only four points ahead of defending champions Riffa.

In Muharraq's win, four of their goals were scored in the first half. Muhammad Sulumba opened the scoring for the winners in fifth minute with a header from close range, and then Victor Manuel Arboleda Murillo doubled their advantage just seven minutes later with a shot from an acute angle in the box.

Abdulwahab Ali then made it 3-0 in the 22nd minute with a header off a long cross from the right, then Budaiya got their lone consolation in the

29th minute from Seydou Barry.

But Muharraq restored their three-goal advantage on the stroke of half-time with a rocket from distance by Hassan Uqabi Haddush. Then, in the fifth minute of second-half stoppage time, Abdulwahab Al Malood applied the final nail in the coffin with Muharraq's fifth from inside the six-yard box.

Muharraq claimed their eighth win while Budaiya suffered their league-worst 13th loss.

Meanwhile, in Sitra's triumph, skipper Barfo Ernest hit a brilliant goal from around a quarter-of-the-pitch's distance in 12th minute. His rocket flew into the net, with East Riffa goalkeeper Eyad Nasser Salem powerless to make the stop.

Moatasem Iskandar then supplied their second goal from edge of the box, with an attempt that should have been controlled by the goalkeeper, but he instead fumbled the ball.

Sitra also claimed their eighth win while handing East Riffa their sixth loss.

Godolphin bid for HM the King's Cup glory

Most prestigious race day in Bahrain horseracing season takes place today at REHC

● Star-studded field of 14 horses go to post in HM the King's Cup

● Godolphin to race with Passion And Glory (IRE) and First Ruler (GB)

TDT | Manama

The most prestigious race day in the Bahrain horseracing season takes place today at Rashid Equestrian and Horseracing Club (REHC) in Sakhir.

The day boasts a strong card with two Listed contests: the feature race, His Majesty The King's Cup (sponsored by Bapco), and the Al Methaq Mile.

A star-studded field of 14 horses go to post in HM The King's Cup. Godolphin have two representatives in the race with Passion And Glory (IRE) lining up for trainer Saeed bin Suroor. The seven-year-old son of Cape Cross has shown good form in Bahrain already this season when finishing second behind stablemate Dubai Future in the Group 3 Bahrain International Trophy in November. Daniel Tudhope, who won the Bahrain International Trophy aboard Dubai Future, will take the ride.

Godolphin's other runner in the race is the Charlie Appleby-trained First Ruler (GB) who will be ridden by British Champion Jockey William Buick. Appleby is no stranger to big



HM the King's personal representative His Highness Shaikh Abdulla bin Hamad Al Khalifa and REHC High Committee chairman His Highness Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa present last year's HM the King's Cup to the winning connections (File photo)

“It's a massive day's racing and it's the last big, prestigious race of the season in Bahrain. It would be nice to go out on a high with a winner

NEIL CALLAN

“This is the raceday of our season. It always has been The King's Cup. It's the equivalent to Royal Ascot; it's the pinnacle of racing in Bahrain

ALLAN SMITH

race wins in Bahrain following a double at The Crown Prince's Cup meeting in February and he will be looking to continue his winning ways this Friday.

First Ruler was last seen when winning in good style at Meydan last month and his trainer hopes he can back that up with another victory on Friday. On his chances, Appleby said: “First Ruler has got a progressive profile. This is his first test at Listed level so we will learn a bit more about him. His profile is going the right way that he doesn't look out of place at this level, but we will be wiser afterwards.

The track and conditions should suit him.”

Appleby also sends over Modern News (GB) who takes his chances in Al Methaq Mile. On Modern News Appleby added: “Modern News is a solid campaigner; I was delighted with his last start at Meydan and stepping back up to a mile will suit him. With a nice draw, I think he is the one they've got to beat. He has got a penalty, but I think he can overcome that, and conditions will suit him.”

A host of top-quality horses trained in Bahrain feature in The King's Cup. Leading jockey Neil Callan, who has enjoyed much success during his time in Bahrain, teams up with last year's winner Zagato (GB) for trainer Fawzi Nass. Nass saddles eight of the 14 runners with Callan able to take his pick of the Al Mohamediya Racing runners.

On his decision to ride Zagato, Callan said: “Zagato won this race last year. I feel he's at the same level this time round. He has been primed for this race. He didn't start until a bit later this season, and I feel as though he is peaking at the right time.

“It's always a very difficult decision when you have the likes of The Covex Kid (IRE) and Encourage (GB) who I've won multiple races on both. It's a massive day's racing and it's the last big, prestigious race of the season in Bahrain. It would be nice to go out on a high with a winner.”

The King's Cup is a race that has gone from strength to strength and the quality of horse required to be competitive has increased over the last few years. Callan added: “It's now internationally recognised as a Listed race which is good for Bahrain racing. You're looking at horses who are rated 100 or above, so it just goes to show the level of horse you need to have.”

Of the other Bahrain-trained horses, Allan Smith has two in the race for Al Adiyat Racing: Rayounpour (IRE) and Recovery Run (GB).

On their chances Smith said: “Recovery Run and Rayounpour have both been in and out of form this season, but they're both working well so we're hopeful. It's a tough old race! The competition is getting much better in Bahrain and the strength of the horses is amazing in the last three years. We love the competition that's what it's all about, it makes everyone get better horses and improve their stable.”

Smith added: “This is the raceday of our season. It always has been The King's Cup. It's the equivalent to Royal Ascot; it's the pinnacle of racing in Bahrain.”



Action at REHC

Najma power past Isa Town in basketball league

TDT | Manama

Al Najma posted a 96-86 victory over Isa Town last night in their week 21 game of the 2022/2023 Zain Bahrain Basketball League.

Najma used a 33-20 second-quarter to turn away a 21-25 deficit at the end of the first to take control of the contest. They maintained their strong play in the second half and led by as many as 16 points the rest of the way.

Ali Jaber came off the bench to contribute a team-high 28 points while also grabbing 13 rebounds and dishing out five assists. Mohammed Hussain added 24 while American Nick Ward had 15 points and Mohammed Buallay 10 with seven assists.

For Isa Town, Oumar Barry scored 33 points and grabbed 12 rebounds in the loss. Hussain Mahdi and Mohamed Nabeel each chipped in with 14.

With the result, Najma claimed

their 12th win in 18 games and improved to 30 points on the league standings. Isa Town suffered their 17th loss and went to 21 points in second-to-last place.

League action continues tonight with a mammoth match-up between bitter rivals Manama and Al Ahli at 7.30pm. At 5.30pm, Nuwaidrat take on Samaheej. Tomorrow, Sitra and Al Ettihad face off in the early game followed by Al Hala taking on Muharraq.

Standings

	P	W	L	Pts
Manama	18	15	3	33
Muharraq	18	14	4	32
Al Ahli	17	13	4	30
Al Ettihad	18	12	6	30
Al Najma	18	12	6	30
Bahrain Club	19	9	10	28
Al Hala	18	9	9	27
Nuwaidrat	18	7	11	25
Sitra	17	4	13	21
Isa Town	19	2	17	21
Samaheej	18	2	16	20



Al Najma's Ali Jaber looks to make a pass during their game against Isa Town