

Sultan Al Rumaihi on the double at Nasser bin Hamad showjumping championship

TDT | Manama

Sultan Al Rumaihi emerged as the star of HH Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa Showjumping Championship after dominating two junior races and bagging first place in both of them.

The event was held at the arena of the Military Sports Federation at the Rashid Equestrian and Horseracing Club under the patronage of HH Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, who instructed the allocation of cash prizes worth BD10,000.

The first competition featured 100/105cm hurdles, and Al Rumaihi clocked 40.86 seconds in a comfortable victory, almost five seconds ahead of second-placed Inmar Ali. Pearl Carter secured the third spot with a time of 52.12 seconds.

In the second contest, which includ-



Sultan Al Rumaihi celebrates with the trophy



Pearl Carter celebrates with her trophy

ed 105/115cm hurdles, Al Rumaihi delivered a faultless performance, winning his second trophy of the day with a time of 55.31 seconds.

Pearl Carter secured the runner-up spot, seven seconds behind the winner, while Titor Roger took third place despite having four faults that overshadowed his better time of 49.78 seconds.

The junior competitions of the HH Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa Showjumping Championship witnessed intense competition among all participants, and Al Rumaihi's stellar performance in both races was the highlight of the event.

The championship attracted a large audience turnout, with participants showcasing their desire to top the podium. The victory adds another feather to Al Rumaihi's cap, who belongs to the Ministry of Interior team.

Bahrain's Al Ahli win thriller in Gulf handball

Anwar bin Abdulla scores decisive goal against Al Safa of Saudi Arabia in tight Group B contest

● Ahli claim first win in two games and must win final preliminary round assignment tomorrow against Sharjah Club of the UAE

● Defending Gulf champions and Bahrain's other participant Najma to determine Group A ranking today against Al Arabi of Qatar at 7pm

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Bahrain's Al Ahli Club bounced back from an opening-game setback with a last-gasp 22-21 victory over Al Safa of Saudi Arabia last night in the 39th Gulf Clubs Men's Handball Championship, currently being held in the Kingdom.

Anwar bin Abdulla fired in the winning goal for the Bahrainis with just two seconds remaining on the game clock to break the deadlock. Safa had roared back in the late stages of the second half after Ahli led for much of the contest.



Al Ahli's Anwar bin Abdulla looks to score against Al Safa during their game

Ahli opened their tournament campaign with a disheartening 20-27 loss to Kuwait SC in their first Group B assignment, but then did well yesterday to keep their hopes alive of making it through to the semi-finals.

Egyptian national team goalkeeper Karim Hamdawy, who Ahli signed for this competition, played a key role for the Bahraini representatives, making a number of key saves throughout the match to keep his team afloat. He was later named the Player

of the Match.

Ahli led 10-7 at the half and then did well to keep their advantage over the final 30 minutes, during which Safa tied the game at 20-all with three minutes to play. Things remained close and that set the stage for bin Abdulla's winner.

Also making important contributions for Ahli were Mahdi Al Qallaf, Ali Mirza, Hassan Shehab, Jassim Al Salatna and Sadiq Ali, to name a few.

Ahli, coached by Ali Anzour,

have one game remaining in the preliminary round. It will be tomorrow against Sharjah Club of the UAE. The contest is scheduled for a 7pm start at Khalifa Sports City Arena in Isa Town.

Sharjah were dealt a narrow 28-29 loss to Kuwait SC of Kuwait in yesterday's other Group B game. Kuwait came away with their second successive victory and are virtually assured of a place in the final four. They face off with Safa in tomorrow's early game, starting at 5pm.

Meanwhile, defending Gulf champions Al Najma, who are



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Action from Kuwait SC's win over Sharjah last night

Bahrain's other team competing in the event, return to the court today for their final assignment in the preliminaries against Al Arabi of Qatar.

The game is scheduled for 7pm at the same venue, and it will determine the final rankings in Group A.

Najma will be looking to maintain their pristine record in the tournament, having won 27-22 against Al Salmiya of Kuwait in their first match and then defeating Al Ahli Sidab of Oman 33-25 in their follow-up game.

Arabi also head into the clash with an undefeated record, hav-

ing ousted Ahli Sidab 30-23 and then narrowly beating Salmiya 24-23.

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Najma won last year's Gulf handball title after defeating Saudi outfit Mudhar in the tournament final in Kuwait City.

It was the sixth time the Bahraini side claimed the coveted championship. Their triumph also ended a two-decade title drought, as their previous victories came in 2001, 1998, 1990, 1985 and 1984.

Benzema disputes 'liar' Deschamps' claim over World Cup fitness

AFP | Paris

Karim Benzema has responded to Didier Deschamps' claim that the striker told him "he wouldn't have been ready" to play at the World Cup because of an injury by implying the France coach

was a "liar".

The Real Madrid forward pulled out of the France squad with an injured left thigh on the eve of the tournament and departed their team hotel in Qatar soon afterwards.

Benzema returned to training with his club on Decem-

ber 10, four days before France played Morocco in the World Cup semi-finals.

"Karim told me himself that he wouldn't have been ready," Deschamps told the Parisien newspaper in an interview published yesterday.

"When Karim got injured,

our doctor accompanied him to the Aspetar clinic to undergo an MRI," said Deschamps.

"Karim passed on the results to someone who follows him in Madrid and who also gave him an opinion. When he came back to the hotel, it was already gone midnight.

"I met Karim in his room with our doctor who had come to give me the report from the scan... Karim was hurt because this World Cup meant a lot to him. He told me, 'It's over.'"

"We stayed together for about 20 minutes," added Deschamps.



Didier Deschamps (C) reacts with Karim Benzema (L) (file photo)