

Muharraq secure semi-final spot in volleyball league

Golden Square line-up complete as Muharraq join Al Najma, Dar Kulaib and Al Ahli in Isa bin Rashid Bahrain Volleyball League

● **Muharraq fight back after narrowly giving up first set in win over Nabih Saleh**

● **Al Ahli rally from a set down to defeat Al Nasser and end their semi-final hopes**

TDT | Manama

Muharraq claimed the fourth and final spot in the Golden Square semi-finals of the 2022/2023 Isa bin Rashid Bahrain Volleyball League last night.

Muharraq secured their berth following a hard-earned 3-1 (25-27, 25-16, 25-21, 25-21) victory over Nabih Saleh and after Al Ahli's come-from-behind 3-2 (23-25, 26-24, 25-21, 20-25, 15-11) victory over Al Nasser.

Both games were part of the last match week in the league's

round-of-six playoffs.

Muharraq and Nasser were the last two teams in contention for the final berth in the Golden Square, where they were looking to join already qualified Al Najma, Dar Kulaib and Ahli.

The six-team playoffs are being played in double round-robin format. The top four move on to the semis. This stage concludes tomorrow with a clash of the titans—a non-bearing game between Najma and Dar Kulaib, who are already assured of the top two spots. They both currently top the round-of-six standings, with Najma boasting an 8-1 win-loss record, followed by Dar Kulaib with a 7-2 mark.

Ahli are third after improving to 7-3 to wrap up this stage, while Muharraq improved to 4-6, followed by Nasser who dropped to 3-7. Nabih Saleh rounded out the table with a winless record after 10 games.

The Golden Square semi-finals have yet to be scheduled by the Bahrain Volleyball Association but will likely get underway



Al Ahli's Jerome Cross attacks Al Nasser at the net during their match last night

next week.

In Muharraq's triumph, they did well to bounce back after narrowly losing the first set with a dominant second. They kept it up in set three but had to battle hard in the fourth, with Nabih Saleh looking to extend the contest.

But Muharraq were able to break an 18-all deadlock with five straight points that made it 23-18. Nabih Saleh could not recover and Muharraq sealed their place in the Golden Square. Meanwhile, in Ahli's win last night, after taking the first set,



Muharraq's Nigerian professional Samuel Anthony Ogwuche, no. 19, looks to block the attack of Nabih Saleh's Saleh Jaffar Sadiq

Nasser could have gone 2-0 up with a late rally in the second. But Ahli were able to score the next two points, capped by a winner from Canadian professional Jerome Cross to tie the match.

Ahli rode their momentum

into the third but Nasser were able to force the tie-break. There, an Ahli double block put them ahead 11-8, and although Nasser stayed close at 11-13, Ahli made no mistake in closing the match out.

Brentford equaliser at Arsenal not properly checked by VAR officials

AFP | London

The body responsible for refereeing in the Premier League admitted yesterday that Brentford's equalising goal in a 1-1 draw at Premier League leaders Arsenal was not properly checked for offside by the VAR officials.

The Gunners dropped what could be two huge points in the title race when Ivan Toney headed in after a scramble inside the Arsenal area.

A lengthy VAR check took place after the goal to examine whether Ethan Pinnock was offside and interfering with play earlier in the move.

But VAR officials then missed the fact Christian Norgaard was in an offside position when he hooked the ball across for Toney to equalise.



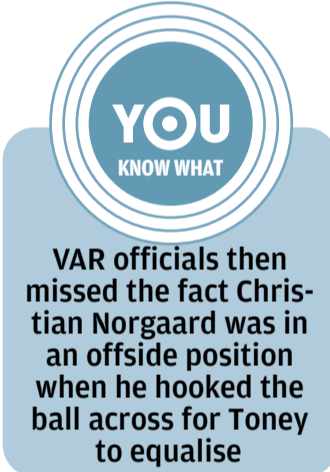
Brentford's Ivan Toney battle for the ball in the air with Arsenal's Thomas Partey

Brentford's goal was not the only controversy of a bad Saturday for officiating in the Premier League.

Brighton had a goal wrongly

ruled out in their 1-1 draw with Crystal Palace.

Pervis Estupinan's strike was disallowed after a VAR review deemed the Ecuadorian to be



offside.

However, the lines drawn by the VAR official to determine the offside used the wrong Palace defender with Marc Guehi stood behind James Tomkins.

Southampton axe boss Jones after three months



Southampton coach Nathan Jones reacts during a match (file photo)

AFP | London

Southampton sacked boss Nathan Jones yesterday after only three months in charge of the Premier League's bottom club.

Jones endured a torrid time after taking over at Southampton in November following the dismissal of Ralph Hasenhuttl.

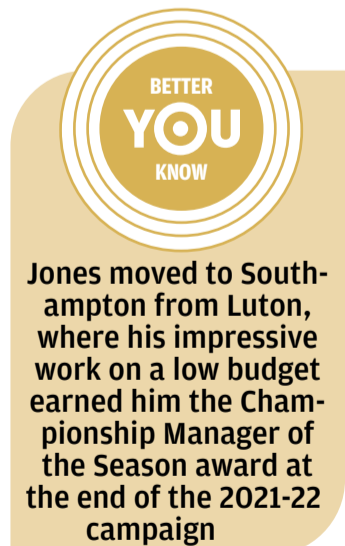
The 49-year-old Welshman struggled to win over Southampton fans, who were unconvinced by his lack of Premier League experience.

The final straw for the Southampton board came on Saturday when Jones' side lost 2-1 at home to 10-man Wolves.

"Southampton Football Club can confirm it has parted company with Men's First Team Manager Nathan Jones," a Southampton statement said.

"First Team Coaches Chris Cohen and Alan Sheehan have also left the club. First Team Lead Coach Ruben Selles will take charge of training and prepare the team ahead of next weekend's game against Chelsea."

Southampton's defeat left



them bottom of the table and four points from safety.

Jones moved to Southampton from Luton, where his impressive work on a low budget earned him the Championship Manager of the Season award at the end of the 2021-22 campaign.

However, his Southampton reign lasted just 14 games in all competitions, of which he won five and lost nine.

Manchester City's achievements cannot be taken away says Guardiola

Reuters | London

Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola has said no one can take away the club's achievements even if the ongoing Premier League investigation into their financial affairs was to see the reigning English champions stripped of their titles.

City have been charged with over 100 breaches of the Premier League's financial regulations from 2009 to 2018 and could face the prospect of losing the three Premier League titles they won during the period and expulsion from the league.

City issued a statement on Monday saying: "The club welcomes the review of this matter by an independent commission, to impartially consider the comprehensive body of irrefutable



Pep Guardiola manager of Manchester City with Riyad Mahrez and Jack Grealish during a match (file photo)

evidence that exists in support of its position."

Former Barcelona and Bayern Munich manager Guardiola said no matter what the outcome of the Premier League investiga-

tion is, City's trophy-winning run would always be worthy of recognition.

"At the end, always we leave thinking what other people think about us. Forget about it.

“The Premier League will decide but I know what we won, and the way we won it, with the effort we put in. For something that happened in 2009 or 2010, I don't how long ago it was, it is not going to change one second. They belong to us. Absolutely, they belong to us. Regardless of the sentence, they belong to us”

PEP GUARDIOLA

Think what we have done. No one can remove it," Guardiola was quoted as saying by British media on Saturday.