



Italy's Alessandro Alberto Bovolenta goes for the kill against Brazil



Bulgaria players, led by star Aleksandar Nikolov, second from right, celebrate their win against Poland

Italy, Bulgaria, Iran in semis

Brazil and Argentina to battle for final spot in final four in 2023 FIVB Men's U21 World Championship

● **Hosts Bahrain come up short against Tunisia in consolation pool**

● **Canada, Egypt, and the Czech Republic all victorious yesterday**

TDT | Manama

Defending champions Italy were joined by Bulgaria and Iran last night as teams to have punched their tickets to the semi-finals of the 2023 FIVB Men's U21 World Championship, currently being hosted by the Kingdom of Bahrain.

The trio secured their berths after each winning their second matches in the tournament's elite eight.

The Italians put in an impressive performance to take down previously unbeaten Brazil in four sets. Bulgaria, meanwhile, defeated Poland in straight sets and in the process eliminated their rivals from further title contention, with Iran doing the same against Thailand.

The last spot in the semis will be decided tonight between just two teams: Brazil and Argentina. The Argentinians kept their hopes alive after winning a five-set

thriller over Belgium.

Today marks the conclusion of this second stage of the tournament, with action wrapping up in Pools E and F amongst the elite eight, as well as in Pools G and H in the consolation bracket. The games are being held between two arenas from 11am, with the last fixtures starting at 8pm. Entrance is free and all are invited to watch the action.

Italy showed their class in their 3-1 (25-23, 31-29, 18-25, 25-21) Pool F triumph over Brazil.

It was a doubly sweet victory for the Italians, who got their payback from a preliminary round loss and ensured their place in the final four.

"This is special revenge," said opposite spiker and Italy's star player Alessandro Alberto Bovolenta. "This is a game we studied. The third set was not like we usually do, but we won and we are in the semi-finals. We are very happy and I can't wait for the final four."

Bovolenta put on a fantastic display of his limitless potential by scoring 35 points to spearhead the Italians, while outside hitter Riccardo Iervolino added 13 markers. Middle blocker Thiery Felipe Oliveira Morais had 14 to pace Brazil.

The Bulgarians secured their berth in the final four with a resounding 3-0 (25-18, 35-33, 25-18) win against Poland in a fiery Pool E contest.

Attack

Star skipper Aleksandar Nikolov scored 18 points, all in attack, to

spearhead the victors, while Venislav Antov had 17, with four block points. Aliaksei Nasevich scored 15 to pace Poland, who will now contest for fifth to eight places.

Bulgarian official Francesco Cadeddu commented: "We played better today. It was a very strong and difficult match with Poland. They have very good players. We can do and we can master in this world championship. I can say good job to our team, and we are waiting for the final four."

Iran asserted themselves against Thailand in a convincing 3-0 (25-11, 25-16, 25-19) win in Pool E. Three players scored nine points apiece for the Iranians, including outside hitters Mastanabad Mobin Nasri and Khanzadeh Firouzjah Poriya, along with middle blocker Fard Shayan Sepehri. Jakkrit Thanomnoi paced the Thais with 11 markers.

In Argentina's tight Pool F decision against the Belgians, they battled back from a set down twice in the game to eke out a 3-2 (21-25, 25-21, 23-25, 28-26, 15-9) result. Opposite German Alfredo Gomez had 28 points for the victors, while middle blocker Imanol Salazar added 18. For the Bel-

gians, outside hitter Pierre Perin had 21, while team captain Ferre Reggers scored 19.

Argentina face off with the Brazilians this evening at 8pm, with the winner booking the last ticket to the final four. The Belgians play Italy, but not even a win will put them through.

In the consolation pools, Tunisia, Canada, Egypt, and the Czech Republic were all winners yesterday.

The Tunisians upset hosts Bahrain 3-2 (25-21, 21-25, 18-25, 25-19, 15-12) in a tight Pool G encounter. Middle blocker Tahar Mahdi Ben had 23 markers for Tunisia while Bahraini opposite Sayed Haseem scored 28. Canada

beat India 3-1 (25-22, 23-25, 25-12, 25-21) in the other Pool G clash. Outside hitter Kaden Schmidt top scorer with 24 points, while opposite Brendan Mills added 20. Aman Kumar had 16 for the Indians in the game.

Canada move on to play for ninth to 12th place following today's concluding games of this second stage. Bahrain, Tunisia and India are vying for the other spot, with the bottom two in their group contesting for 13th to 16th.

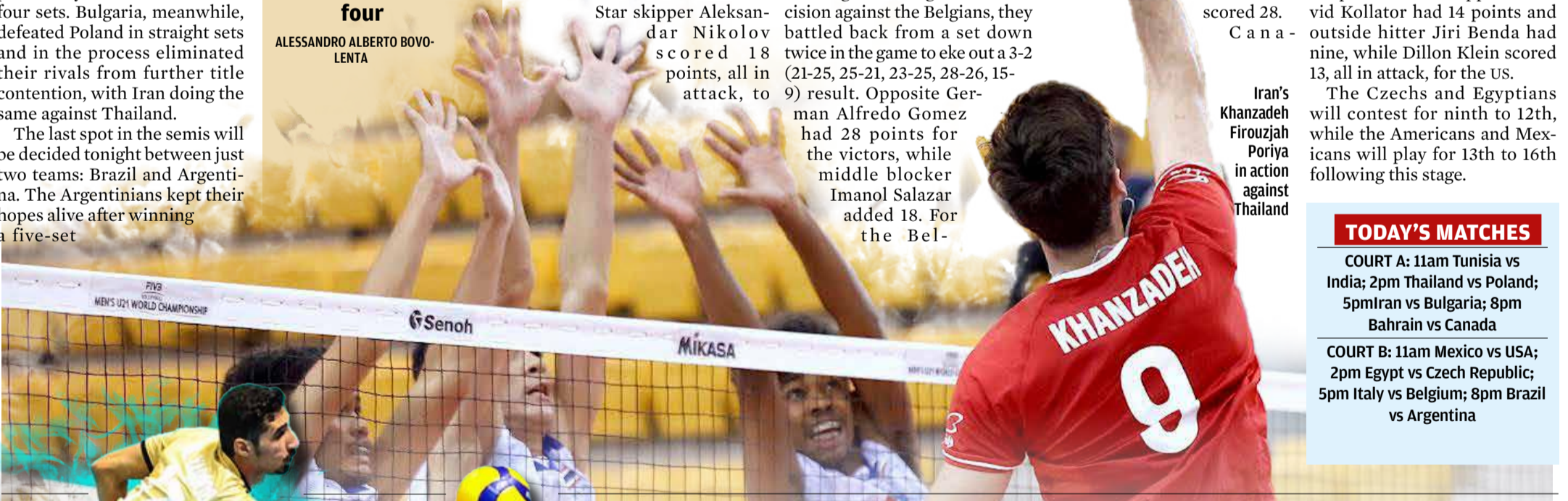
Egypt and Mexico played to a thrilling finish, with the Egyptians taking a 3-1 (25-12, 25-15, 22-25, 35-33) victory in Pool H. Ziad Mohamed had 26 points and Hamza Awad 11, while Angel Ivan Dominguez Carrillo scored 21 to lead Mexico.

In the other Pool H match, the Czech Republic outplayed the US 3-0 (25-19, 25-16, 25-17) for their third successive win since the preliminaries. Opposite David Kollator had 14 points and outside hitter Jiri Benda had nine, while Dillon Klein scored 13, all in attack, for the US.

The Czechs and Egyptians will contest for ninth to 12th, while the Americans and Mexicans will play for 13th to 16th following this stage.

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ALESSANDRO ALBERTO BOVOLENTA



Iran's Khanzadeh Firouzjah Poriya in action against Thailand

TODAY'S MATCHES

COURT A: 11am Tunisia vs India; 2pm Thailand vs Poland; 5pm Iran vs Bulgaria; 8pm Bahrain vs Canada

COURT B: 11am Mexico vs USA; 2pm Egypt vs Czech Republic; 5pm Italy vs Belgium; 8pm Brazil vs Argentina

Bahrain cruise against the Philippines

● **Senior men's national volleyball team claim straight-sets win**

● **Bahrainis to next face Australia in tournament's round of six**

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Bahrain breezed past the Philippines 3-0 (25-20, 25-17, 25-23) yesterday to qualify for the top six in the fourth AVC Men Challenger, currently being held in Chinese-Taipei.

The Bahrainis put in a class performance in the match to secure their place in the next elimination stage.

They will have a tough task ahead when they take on Australia in their follow-

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ing fixture, scheduled for today. The Bahrain team in the tournament includes Mohammed Yaqoob, Mahmood Al Afia, Ali Habib, Nasser Anan, Mahmood Abdullhussain, Mahmoud Abdulwahed, Ali Ebrahim, Ebrahim Mohammed, Abbas Al Khabbaz, Mohammed Jassim, Mohammed Omar, Hani Ali, Ayman Haroona and Abbas Sultan.

They are being guided by head coach Ruben Adrian Wolochin from Argentina.

Bahrain's Mohammed Yaqoob in action against the Philippines yesterday