

Bahrain outclass Hong Kong

Kingdom's senior men's national football team wrap up World Cup-Asian Cup joint-qualification campaign with resounding 4-0 victory in final Group C match

● **Sayed Hashem Isa fires in brace, Sayed Dhiya Saeed and Ismaeel Abdullatif add others in four-goal second-half show**

● **Bahrainis finish third in Group C of joint-qualifying, exit World Cup contention but advance in Asian Cup qualification**

TDT | Manama

Bahrain wrapped up their campaign in the joint-qualifiers for the FIFA World Cup 2022 and AFC Asian Cup 2023 last night with an emphatic 4-0 victory over Hong Kong at the National Stadium in Riffa.

Sayed Hashem Isa had a brace while Sayed Dhiya Saeed and substitute Isameel Abdullatif supplied the other goals in the contest, which was the Bahrainis' eighth and last assignment in qualification Group C.

Despite the win, the Bahrainis were unable to push through to the next round of World Cup



Bahrain's Sayed Hashem Isa battles for possession with Hong Kong's Clayton Michel Afonso

qualifying. The nationals did, however, advance in Asian Cup qualification.

All four of Bahrain's goals came after half-time.

Following a goalless first period, it did not take long for Saeed to find the target as the Bahraini skipper was able to squeak in the opener just four minutes after the re-start.

Hong Kong goalkeeper Yapp Hung Fai made a pair of fine saves on successive attempts by Saeed and Mahdi Humaidan. But on the ensuing high rebound, Saeed was able to outjump his markers and get enough of a touch with a header to send the

ball past the goal line.

Just five minutes later, Isa doubled Bahrain's advantage from the penalty spot. The influential forward was tripped in the area by Hong Kong's Huang Yang, and he stepped up to take the penalty himself, which he



Bahrain finish with four wins from eight matches in Group C, which they complete with 15 points. The nationals lost just once and drew the three other times

fired in to the left of goal.

Isa then made it 3-0 in the 70th minute after some crafty, quick passing from his teammates. Mohammed Marhoon found an unmarked Rashed Alhooti on the left of the box, and the wily defender sent in a low cross to a perfectly positioned

Isa in the face of goal, and he needed only to tap the ball home.

Abdullatif then applied the final nail in the coffin a minute before full time with Bahrain's second penalty of the game after fellow-sub Ali Madan was taken down in the area by Hong Kong's Chung Wai Keung. Abdullatif made no mistake with his spot kick, which he placed into the bottom-right corner.

The result earned Bahrain their fourth win in Group C as they finished with 15 points. The nationals lost just once in their eight games, while drawing the three other times. Hong Kong suffered their fifth loss and wrapped up the joint-qualifiers with five points.

Bahrain head coach Helio Sousa fielded last night a starting 11 that included Sayed Mohammed Jaafar in goal; Ahmed Bughammar, Abdulla Al Hazza, Ahmed Merza and Alhooti in defence; Saeed, Mohammed Ab-

Group C standings

	P	W	D	L	+/-	Pts
Iran	8	6	0	2	30	18
Iraq	8	5	2	1	+10	17
Bahrain	8	4	3	1	+11	15
Hong Kong	8	1	2	5	-9	5
Cambodia	8	0	1	7	-42	1

dulwahab, Kumail Alaswad and Humaidan in midfield; and the strike-partnership of Isa and Abbas Al Asfoor.

There were eight groups in all in this now-completed second round of joint-qualifiers, with five nations in each group. To end this stage, the eight group winners and the four best runners-up advanced to the third round of World Cup qualifying, and also secured their Asian Cup berths.

The next best 24 teams, which includes Bahrain, will compete in a separate competition for 12 remaining Asian Cup slots.

Iran edge past Iraq to top Group C table

● **Russian Premier League Player of the Year Sardar Azmoun scores winning goal, lifting Iran to sixth win**

● **Iran top Group C while Iraq finish as runners-up, as both teams advance in World Cup qualifying and secure Asian Cup berths**

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Iran battled past Iraq 1-0 last night to secure first place in Group C of joint-qualification for the FIFA World Cup 2022 and AFC Asian Cup 2023.

The match was played at the



Action from the match

Shaikh Ali bin Mohammed Al Khalifa Stadium at Muharraq Club in Arad.

Russian Premier League Player of the Year Sardar Azmoun scored the game's lone

goal in the 35th minute of play.

Ehsan Hajsafi supplied the assist with a fine cross from the left of the box to an unmarked Azmoun right in front of goal. Azmoun pounced and sent

the ball into the bottom-right corner of the net, for what eventually proved to be the winner.

The result gave Iran their sixth victory after eight matches as they leapfrogged the Iraqis to first place in Group C with 18 points.

It was the first loss for Iraq in qualification. They finished as group runners-up with 17 points.

As the top two teams in the group, both Iran and Iraq advance to the Asian Football Confederation's third round of World Cup qualifying. They have also secured their berths in the Asian Cup.

Finishing below them on the Group C table were Bahrain with 15 points, Hong Kong with five and Cambodia with just one point.

Bahrain drawn in tough pool for U21 world volleyball championship

● **Tournament draw held virtually yesterday, Bahrainis set to play Poland, Cuba and co-hosts Bulgaria in first round**

● **The under-21 worlds are scheduled to take place September 23 to October 3, co-hosted by Bulgaria and Italy**

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Bahrain's junior national volleyball team were drawn alongside Poland, Cuba and co-hosts Bulgaria in Pool B for the FIVB Volleyball Men's U21 World Championship, scheduled to take place later this



A screenshot of Bahrain being drawn from the pots yesterday during the virtual ceremony

The draw for the global competition, organised by the International Volleyball Federation (FIVB), was held yesterday in a virtual ceremony streamed

online from Rome, Italy.

The tournament is scheduled to be held between September 23 and October 3 and will be co-hosted by Bulgaria and Italy.

Bahrain's junior squad is coached by Brazilian Issanaye Ramires, and the team features many of the Kingdom's top rising talents.

The Bahrainis qualified for the under-21 worlds based on their FIVB U21 World Ranking. The nationals were one of four teams to book their slots this way, with the others being Poland, the Czech Republic and Morocco.

In addition to Bulgaria and Italy as co-hosts, 10 other teams qualified via separate continental tournaments, making for a 16-nation field.

Following yesterday's draw, the teams in Pool A include Italy, Egypt, the Czech Republic, and



The previous under-21 world championship was held in Bahrain in 2019, when the hosts put on a spirited fight in front of their home crowd and took an impressive eighth place overall

another to-be-determined qualifier; Pool C consists of Iran, Argentina, Morocco and Belgium; while Pool D features Russia, Brazil, Cameroon and Canada.

Following the first stage, the

top two teams from each pool move on to the final eight in Pools E and F in the second round. The bottom two will play for the ninth to 16th places in Pools G and H.

That will set the stage for the last four, and then the bronze and gold medal games, plus the final classification matches.

Individual awards will be handed out to the Most Valuable Player, Best Setter, Best Outside Spiker, Best Middle Blockers, Best Opposite Spiker and Best Libero.

The previous under-21 worlds was held in Bahrain in 2019. Iran won the gold medals then, while Italy claimed the silver and Brazil clinched bronze.

The Bahrainis put on a spirited fight in front of their home crowd, as they took an impressive eighth place after reaching the knockout quarter-finals.

Top-seed Medvedev knocked out of Halle in first round

AFP | Halle

World number two Daniil Medvedev was a first-round casualty at the ATP grass court tournament in Halle yesterday as he suffered a shock defeat to Germany's Jan-Lennard Struff.

Struff, ranked 45th in the world, bounced back from 5-2 down in the first set to claim a 7-6(8/6), 6-3 victory over the Russian, who was the top seed in Halle.

"This is the biggest win, rankings wise, of my career and to do it here on home soil is very special. I only live an hour from here," said Struff, 32, after his first career win over Medvedev at the fourth attempt.