

# Kokkinakis clinches Bahrain ATP singles title

● **Australian Thanasi Kokkinakis defeats Abedallah Shelbayh of Jordan 6-1, 6-4 in singles final**

TDT | Manama

Thanasi Kokkinakis of Australia, ranked 141st in the world, was yesterday crowned singles champion of the Bahrain Ministry of Interior Tennis Challenger 2023, part of the ATP Challenger Tour, which came to a close at the Public Security Officers Club in Gudaibiya.

Kokkinakis claimed the coveted title after defeating Jordanian wildcard Abedallah Shelbayh

6-1, 6-4 in the final.

Interior Minister General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa attended the contest and crowned the winners, in the presence of His Majesty the King's Advisor for Youth and Sports Saleh bin Isa bin Hindi.

Youth Affairs Minister Rawan bint Najeeb Tawfiqi, Public Security Chief Lieutenant-General Tariq bin Hassan Al Hassan and Bahrain Tennis Federation Chairman Shaikh Abdulaziz bin Mubarak Al Khalifa also attended.

Gen Shaikh Rashid hailed the support of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minis-



Thanasi Kokkinakis receives the singles champion's trophy from General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa

ter to sports in Bahrain. He also commended the role of HM the King's Representative for Humanitarian Work and Youth Affairs, Supreme Council for Youth and Sports Chairman His High-

ness Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa in supporting youth and sports.

Eighth-seeded Kokkinakis was the favourite heading into the clash, and was dominant

with his serve, finishing the match with 12 aces.

With the result, the 26-year-old came away with his fifth championship on the ATP Challenger Tour, which is the sec-

ond-highest tier of international men's professional competitions behind only the ATP Tour.

The Bahrain tournament was held for the second successive year, and Kokkinakis joined India's Ramkumar Ramanathan as the tournament's singles winners.

Also triumphant in the Kingdom this year were doubles champions Patrik Niklas-Salminen of Finland and Bart Stevens of the Netherlands. Last year's doubles title was claimed by the Portuguese duo of Nuno Borges and Francisco Cabral.

The 2023 event featured a 32-player singles draw and a 16-team doubles draw, with matches taking place on hardcourt. The total prize money in the competition was \$160,000.

# Bahrain set for Formula 1 action!

F1 Aramco Pre-Season Testing 2023 set to take Bahrain International Circuit by storm this week



Ferrari's Charles Leclerc on track at BIC during pre-season testing last year

● **Three days of F1 testing are scheduled to take place in Sakhir from Thursday to Saturday**

● **Two open days for fans on Friday and Saturday, with tickets at BD5 for adults and BD2.5 for kids**

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Bahrain International Circuit (BIC), "The Home of Motorsport in the Middle East", is all geared up to host the Formula 1 Aramco Pre-Season Testing 2023 this week from Thursday to Saturday in Sakhir.

Huge crates filled with F1 teams' car parts and equipment have already arrived at BIC and the excitement is reaching fever pitch for the first and only on-track running ahead of the 2023 FIA Formula 1 World Champi-

onship.

The tests will be open to fans on Friday and Saturday, with the first day's events on Thursday being held behind closed doors.

Following the completion of the F1 teams' car and livery launches last week, fans who are eager to get a first glimpse of the 2023 contenders in action can purchase their tickets to the tests at BD5 per day and at half the price at BD2.5 each for children aged 3 to 12.

Tickets will be available at the gate or can be purchased today at bahraingp.com or by calling the BIC Hotline on +973-17450000.

All those attending the F1 pre-season tests will be able to follow the action from BIC's Main Grandstand, which overlooks the F1 Pit Lane, the teams' garages and the circuit's main straight. Gates will be open from midday to 7pm on both open days.

BIC is also offering a special Paddock Club experience, with incredible hospitality, cuisine



**Testing in Bahrain is the F1 teams' and drivers' only chance to get crucial information on their cars' performance on track ahead of the start of the 2023 season at the F1 Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix from 3 to 5 March**

and the best view in the house. Those interested in the Paddock Club package should e-mail corporate@bic.com.bh.

The F1 Aramco Pre-Season Testing 2023 follows the three days of tests held last week at BIC in the FIA Formula 2 Championship and FIA Formula 3 Championship—chief feeder

series to F1 featuring the top flight's future stars.

Testing in Bahrain is the F1 teams' and drivers' only chance to get crucial information on their cars' performance on track ahead of the start of the 2023 season, taking place just one week after the tests with the F1 Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix from 3 to 5 March at BIC.

Tickets to this year's F1 Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix are selling fast and those looking to experience the pinnacle of motorsport must purchase theirs at the earliest so as not to miss out on the region's biggest event of the year.

Aside from grandstand seating, there are also a number of exclusive hospitality options available with The Dome Lounge and The Champions Club.

Visit bahraingp.com or call the BIC Hotline on +973-17450000 to make a purchase or to get more information on ticket prices and the hospitality packages.

# Sublime Messi free kick earns PSG 4-3 win over Lille



Soccer Football - Ligue 1 - Paris St Germain v Lille - Parc des Princes, Paris, France - February 19, 2023 Paris St Germain's Lionel Messi in action

Reuters | Paris

Lionel Messi scored a stunning free kick in added time to earn Paris St Germain a 4-3 comeback win over Lille yesterday and lift them seven points clear at the top of the Ligue 1 standings.

PSG, who have struggled for consistency since their return from the World Cup break, extended their lead over the chasing pack, while AS Monaco moved into second with a 2-1 win over Brest.

Third-placed Olympique de Marseille travel to Toulouse later on Sunday.

Lille almost caught hosts PSG off guard in the opening 40 seconds when Timothy Weah's low shot took a wicked deflection, but Gianluigi Donnarumma was down fast to save with his legs.

PSG quickly grew into the game after the early scare at the Parc des Princes, with Messi hitting the target from a tight angle after being played through by Neymar.

Kylian Mbappe, making his first start since a two-week injury layoff, opened the scoring in the 11th minute with a bril-

liant piece of individual skill, ghosting past two opponents and squeezing a shot under keeper Lucas Chevalier.

"The match was not great, we made a lot of mistakes but we have shown that even when the context is not favourable, we can get through. We are a different team, we can get by all the time," Mbappe told Prime Video.

Christophe Galtier's side doubled their lead six minutes later when Neymar tapped in a Vitinha cross to finish off a flowing move.

However, Lille were far from passive as Jonathan David tested Donnarumma with a bullet header before Bafode Diakite nodded home an Andre Gomes cross to pull one back in the 24th minute.

Messi won a free kick five minutes into stoppage time and the Argentine curled it into the bottom corner to score his 11th league goal of the season and seal a dramatic victory for PSG.

Lille dropped to sixth following Stade Rennais's 2-0 win over Clermont.

Lens secured a 3-1 home win over Nantes to move up to 49 points, level with Marseille in third.