

# Bahrain's Mahmoud wins shot put silver in Portugal indoor meet

● Bahraini Noora Salem Jasim narrowly misses out on podium in women's shot put

TDT | Manama

Bahrain's elite athlete Abdelrahman Mahmoud claimed an impressive silver medal for the men's shot put at the Meeting Moniz Pereira in Pombal, Portugal.

Mahmoud claimed his runner-up finish after registering a throw of 20.26 metres.

It was not far behind the gold medal-winning mark of 20.40m by Roman Kokoshko from Ukraine. They were the only two participants to throw



Abdelrahman Mahmoud, right, with his silver medal at the meeting

beyond 20m.

Jose Lorenzo Hernandez of Spain won the bronze with a throw of 16.55.

Mahmoud's performance was his best for the year so far but it was not his personal best for the indoor shot put. That mark is 21.10m, which he set in 2021 as both a Bahrain record and an Asian record.

Meanwhile, also in Pombal, Bahrain's Noora Salem Jasim narrowly missed out on a podium in the women's shot put.

She had a best mark of 13.89m. Winning gold was Jessica Inchude of Portugal with a 17.81m throw.

Noora's effort was her first competition of the year. Her personal best for the indoor shot put is 17.45m, which she set in 2017 as a Bahrain record.

## Bayern's Salihamidzic calls Gnabry 'amateurish' for Paris fashion 'frolic'

AFP | Munich

Bayern Munich sporting director Hasan Salihamidzic criticised forward Serge Gnabry for his "amateurish" Paris Fashion Week visit, saying "the title is at stake".

Gnabry jetted to Paris after Bayern's 1-1 away draw with Leipzig on Friday, sharing pictures of the trip on social media.

Salihamidzic reacted after Bayern drew 1-1 at home against Cologne on Tuesday.

Gnabry was subbed off at halftime. Coach Julian Nagelsmann said after the match he wanted to bring in "a breath of fresh air."

Salihamidzic later suggested



Serge Gnabry

the Germany forward was not fully focused.

"That's amateurish, that's exactly what Bayern Munich isn't, frolicking somewhere when you have a day off," the sporting director said, hinting that the former Arsenal forward may face consequences.

"A day off is to rest so that you can step on the accelerator in the next game.

"We will talk about that yesterday, for sure. Of course there is a need to talk about it."

The 27-year-old Gnabry had already been criticised in the German media.

Speaking on Monday, Nagelsmann said the striker had not broken any rules but needed to "give the right answer (to the criticism) on the pitch."



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HASAN SALIHAMIDZIC

## Tottenham sign winger Danjuma on loan from Villarreal

AFP | London

Tottenham have made their first signing of the January transfer win-

dow as Netherlands winger

Arnaut Danjuma joined on loan from Villarreal for the rest of the season.

Antonio Conte's side

swooped for Danjuma after

the 25-year-old had looked set to join Premier League strugglers Everton.

Danjuma will give Conte

another attacking option as

he looks to lift fifth-placed Tottenham back into the Premier League's top four after their recent struggles.



Serge Gnabry

## Djokovic is no 'villain' - took me 10 years to get over cheat storm: Azarenka



Victoria Azarenka plays a backhand return to Jessica Pegula

AFP | Melbourne

Victoria Azarenka said it took her 10 years to get over being accused of cheating when she last won the Australian Open, and defended Novak Djokovic who has been accused of dramatising his injury during this year's tournament.

The 33-year-old two-time champion rolled back the years at Melbourne Park on Tuesday night, dismissing Jessica Pegula 6-4, 6-1 to reach the semi-finals for the first time since 2013.

During her run to the second of her back-to-back Australian titles that year, Azarenka took a nine-minute medical timeout in the semi-final against Sloane Stephens after failing to convert five match points.

Azarenka went on to turn the match around and eventually lift the trophy, but she had to defend herself from accusations of gamesmanship and cheating.

The Belarusian revealed later she had suffered a panic attack on court and couldn't breathe, which caused the long delay.

# Djokovic, Sabalenka roll into Australian Open semi-finals

Novak Djokovic crushes Andrey Rublev in style, romps on towards 10th Australian title

● Ominous Sabalenka sets up Australian Open semi-final with Linette

● Paul downs Shelton in all-American clash to make semis

AFP | Melbourne

Novak Djokovic was two wins away from a 22nd Grand Slam crown after bulldozing into the Australian Open semi-finals yesterday, while Aryna Sabalenka was equally impressive in reaching the women's last four.

Serbia's Djokovic delivered a masterclass to crush Russian fifth seed Andrey Rublev 6-1, 6-2, 6-4 on Rod Laver Arena and set up a meeting with Tommy Paul for a place in Sunday's final.

Djokovic's quest to go level with great rival Rafael Nadal on a leading 22 major titles carries an air of inevitability.

The 35-year-old struggled with a hamstring injury in the early rounds at Melbourne Park but was dominant during his fourth-round demolition of Alex de Minaur and was equally clinical against the outclassed Rublev.

"Last two matches, playing against two guys who were in form and to beat them dominantly in three sets is something that I definitely want in this moment, something that sends a message to all my opponents,"



Novak Djokovic in action during his match against Andrey Rublev

said a buoyant Djokovic.

"With this kind of game the confidence level rises, so I feel better on the court as the tournament progresses."

Victory for the red-hot favourite propelled him into a 44th Grand Slam semi-final to close the gap on Roger Federer's all-time record of 46.

Anything other than a rampant win for Djokovic against unseeded Paul would amount to a massive upset, albeit at a tournament that has seen numerous shocks in the men's and women's draws.

Paul defeated his fellow American Ben Shelton 7-6 (8/6), 6-3, 5-7, 6-4 to reach his first major semi-final.

But former world number one Djokovic, who can return to the top of the rankings if he wins the Australian Open for a record-extending 10th time, will

be a whole new prospect.

Paul, ranked 35, and the Serb great have never played each other before.

"I saw him in the locker room after I finished my match. He said, 'congrats,'" said the 25-year-old, adding they had practised together before.

"Obviously he's pretty comfortable here in Australia," the American added. "It's going to be a challenging match but I'm playing some of my best tennis, so it's a good time."

The other semi-final is between third seed Stefanos Tsitsipas and Russian 18th seed Karen Khachanov.

### Ominous Sabalenka

Sabalenka set up a semi-final with surprise-package Magda Linette after once again displaying the kind of form and finesse that have made her favourite for



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NOVAK DJOKOVIC

the women's title.

The Belarusian fifth seed defeated Croatia's Donna Vekic 6-3, 6-2 as she closes on a first Grand Slam title.

The match was closer than the score suggested, but Sabalenka is playing scintillating tennis -- she is yet to drop a set so far this year.

It is a far cry from a year ago, when she struggled badly with her serve and was reduced to tears at an Australian Open warm-up tournament.

The 24-year-old is benefiting from a different approach when facing adversity on court.

"Before I was trying to go for aces, go for crazy shots to get easily out, to get out easily from those situations," she said.

"Right now I keep saying: 'No, work for it, it's not going to be easy.'"

Sabalenka will play unseeded Linette for a place in Saturday's final after the Pole marched into her first major semi-final at the age of 30.



**Tommy Paul is only the third active American man to reach a Grand Slam semi-final, joining John Isner (2018 Wimbledon) and Frances Tiafoe (2022 US Open) but will have to register a seismic shock if he is to go any further**

Linette stunned former world number one Karolina Pliskova 6-3, 7-5 to continue flying the flag for Poland after the shock exit of world number one Iga Swiatek.

"I'm so emotional, I can't really believe it," said Linette, ranked 45 in the world.

"It's a dream come true. I'm super grateful and happy. Thank you for cheering and supporting, I really needed this.

"So we keep going. I don't want to get too excited because we are still in the tournament," added the Pole.

Two-time Melbourne champion Victoria Azarenka, also from Belarus, will face Moscow-born Kazakh Elena Rybakina in the other semi-final.

Both women's semi-finals are today.