

[Al Rayyan spikers lift Emir Cup again](#)

Al Rayyan Club accomplished an unprecedented sweep with a dominant performance in the final of the Emir Cup Volleyball Championship at the Qatar Volleyball Association Indoor Hall on Saturday.

Playing their 26th final, The Lions took 74 minutes to post a lop-sided 25-17, 25-18, 25-19 victory over Al Ahli Club, who made the grade after 22 long years.

This was the 13th Emir Cup title for the defending champions, who won everything this season that came within their view. Their previous five titles this year were the Super Cup against Police, the QVA League, the Arab Clubs Championship against ES Tunis, the National Tournament against Al Arabi Club and the Qatar Cup against Police.

And since winning the Emir Cup last year, it is their seventh title in a row!

Al Rayyan Club ruled the season like never before. They suffered only one loss - a defeat at the hands of the Qatar Sports Club during the Qatar Cup playoffs but bounced back to knock out the rivals 2-1, enter the final and win it too.

The icing on the cake is still left! Twice runners-up Al Rayyan will travel to Myanmar in July-August to compete in the Asian Clubs Championship. The task is no doubt tough but the high standards of volleyball they have set now, anything is possible for them.

For Al Rayyan Club, French star Earvin N'Gapeth had a game-high 22 points, including 18 from his attack play. Marcus also played well to collect 13, while captain Mubarak Dahi Waleed added 11, all from his smashes.

Geraldo Goiano was the best scorer for Al Ahi Club with 12, while Slovenia star and N'Gapeth's Modena Volley teammate Tine Urnaut gained 10.

Al Rayyan Club coach Carlos Schwanke said, "I'm proud of my team and of what we did in the season. I just told them to work hard and the results will follow automatically. The result in the final tonight is the proof of that. We won all the tournaments that we played.

"These players are amazing...I showed them the dreams, but they put in a great effort. They tried to do better in each session and every match. We did not expect a clean sweep. We took the game to new levels by bringing to matches what we did for hours in training. I am really very happy and proud of my team's performance," Schwanke said.

Al Rayyan Club skipper Waleed said, "I want to thank God for the great season we had. I want to congratulate all the players and members of the support staff. Also I want to thank Abdulla al Mutawa, Mubarak Eid and team manager Nasser for the support.

"We had a memorable time. This is the sixth title of the season. People think that our season has finished. However, we're waiting to go to the Asia Clubs Championship in two months, which is the most important assignment for us. Right now, we're very excited with another Amir Cup trophy," he said.

Middle player Bairama Faye also had a good time on the court and he pulled off a couple brilliant blocks. He said, "We talked about the match in the locker room and said if we play our level, Al Ahli won't be able to handle us. We've worked harder than any team in Qatar and as a result, this is our seventh title in a row. We're extremely pleased with this."

For the four-time finalists and 1987-88 champions, their entry to the final after over two decades and the return of strong smasher Goiano from an injury could not inspire much. They resisted well in the beginning and succeeded in causing a few moments of worry to the opponents.

However, a big 8-1 run at 8-9 by Al Rayyan Club, in which the serves of Bairama Faye and Waleed upset the rhythm of Al Ahli Club, made it clear where the set is heading to. Later, a Marcus block on Alaoui fetched the set point and N'Gapeth fired a spike to put his team 1-0 up.

The second set was slightly closer till midway. At 10-11, the fiery service of N'Gapeth was too hot for Al Ahli to handle. It resulted into a four-point push and then Al Ahli Club were under tremendous pressure to stay in the set. An Urnaut smash service went out to hand the set point to Al Rayyan and N'Gapeth drilled the ball into the opponents' court to make it 2-0.

Then the question arose if Al Rayyan Club can win 3-0. They had a positive start and moved 7-4 clear. However, Al Ahli rallied through Tine Urnaut, Goiano and M Bishri to narrow down the margin. They kept chasing the rivals till 16-17. At this stage, Waleed smashed to create a three-point gap. Soon Faye pulled off a monster block on Goiano (23-18).

N'Gapeth produced a cleve sideline drop to set up the match point for Al Rayyan Club. Al Ahli Club got a reprieve as Bilal served out and it was followed up by a smash chance to N'Gapeth, who rifled a cross-court spike to seal the victory.

Al Ahli Club coach Igor Arbutina said, "We had a difficult season but we're proud of reaching the final of the most prestigious volleyball event in Qatar. We played the semi-finals without Geraldo. But the entire team played as one unit. I'm really happy about my team.

"I must congratulate Al Rayyan Club for showing their supremacy. They won everything in the season. We also did well to get past strong rivals like Police in the quarter-finals and then Qatar Sports Club. I'm sure this will prove a big boost for the future," the former Al Rayyan and Qatar national team coach said.

Al Ahli Club captain Assam Mahmoud said, "I'm very proud of my teammates. We all battled hard and managed to qualify for the final after 22 years. The runners-up in the Amir Cup is a good finish for us and we hope this will inspire us to do better next season."

Result

Al Rayyan Club beat Al Ahli Club 25-17, 25-18, 25-19 in 74 minutes

Teams:

Al Rayyan Club:

Mohamed, William Bermudez, Milos, Suleiman Saeed (L), Earvin N'Gapeth, Marcus, Bilal, Mubarak

Dahi Waleed, Rahimi Wadidi, Bairama Faye, Ahmed, Andre Luiz.

Head coach: Carlos Schwanke; Assistant coach: Toufik Benmessedak

Al Ahli Club:

Mohamed E, Ali Asadi, Assam Ahmed Mahmoud, Alaoui, Kamal, Geraldo Goiano, Samy (L), M Bishri, Driss, Tine Urnaut, Saeed, Ali Kanani (L), Mattar.

Head coach: Igor Arbutina; Assistant coach: Alvaro Martin