

# Yavi and Balew Lead Bahrain to Cross-Country Gold



Winfred Yavi and Motosio celebrate Bahrain's one-two finish



Balew claims the men's 10km title

TDT | Manama

Bahrain delivered a stand-out performance on Sunday at the 60th CISM World Military Cross-Country Championships in Trikala, Greece, claiming a golden double against elite international competition.

Paris 2024 Olympic gold-medallist Winfred Yavi continued her remarkable start to the season, following up her recent victory at the Cross di Alà dei Sardi in Italy with a dominant run to the women's 8km title.

Yavi crossed the line in 25:43, leading compatriot Violah Jepchumba Motosio to complete a

Bahrain one-two, while France's Mekdes Woldu Alazar took bronze. Shitaye Eshete finished fifth and Bontu Rebitu 29th, rounding out Bahrain's strong showing in a field of nearly 80 competitors.

Yavi's performance further cements her place as one of the world's top steeplechasers, with her sights now set on the Asian

Games in Nagoya later this year.

On the men's side, reigning Asian Games champion Birhanu Balew produced a thrilling finish to claim the 10km crown, edging Algeria's Ramdane Ouarghi by just two seconds with a time of 28:21.

Morocco's Mustapha Akkaoui completed the podium, while Bahrain's Albert Rop and Dawit

Fikadu placed sixth and 13th respectively. Abraham Cheroben was among three athletes who did not finish in the 128-runner field.

Bahrain capped the championships with bronze in the mixed 4x2km relay. Nelly Jepkosgei Korir, Abdulkani Hamid, Tigest Mekonen, and Abdulsamad Hirsi combined

for a time of 23:41, finishing behind gold-medallists Ethiopia and silver-medal winners Morocco.

The results highlight Bahrain's growing strength in cross-country, with both individual brilliance and team depth on full display at this prestigious international military competition.

## Liverpool's Slot says his 'football heart' does not like set-piece trend



Liverpool manager Arne Slot reacts after a match (file photo)

AFP | London

Liverpool boss Arne Slot said yesterday that the growing reliance on set pieces in the Premier League has sucked some of the joy out of football but accepts it is the new reality.

Last season's champions struggled with dead-ball situations both defensively and in attacking areas earlier in the campaign.

But seven of their past nine Premier League goals have come from set pieces, including three following corners in Saturday's 5-2 win against West Ham at Anfield.

Premier League leaders Arsenal are renowned as the set-piece kings and on Sunday scored their 16th goal from a corner this season -- equalling the league record.

"First of all, you have to accept it. I think it's mainly here in the Premier League," Slot told reporters yesterday.

"If I watch other leagues, I don't think there's so much emphasis on set pieces."

The Liverpool manager said he felt goalkeepers in the Premier League were given less protection by match officials than those in other leagues such as the Dutch top division.

## AFC Reschedules West Zone Knockout Matches

TDT | Manama

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) confirmed on Sunday that several key West Zone fixtures in its elite club competitions have been rescheduled due to ongoing developments in the Middle East.

Matches in the Round of 16 for the AFC Champions League Elite 2025-2026, originally scheduled for March 2 and 3, will now be played at a later date. High-profile ties affected include Al Ahli of Saudi Arabia vs. Al-Duhail of Qatar in Doha, as well as Shabab Al Ahli Dubai vs. Tractor SC of Iran and Al Wahda of the UAE



vs. Al-Ittihad of Saudi Arabia. Similarly, Round of 16 fixtures

2026 involving West Zone clubs, originally set for March 3 and 4, have also been postponed until further notice.

Clubs from the East Zone will continue to compete according to previously published schedules across all AFC competitions.

The AFC emphasized that the decision prioritizes the safety and security of players, officials, teams, and fans, and officials will continue to closely monitor the situation. Updated fixtures will be published on the confederation's official website once conditions allow, underlining the AFC's commitment to fair and safe competition for all clubs involved.

## Barca must 'make the impossible possible': coach Flick on Atletico cup challenge

AFP | Barcelona

Barcelona coach Hansi Flick insisted yesterday his team could turn around a 4-0 deficit in the Copa del Rey semi-final tie against Atletico Madrid.

The Catalan giants host Diego Simeone's side on Tuesday in the second leg after a heavy defeat by the Rojiblancos in

February, needing a spectacular comeback if they are to defend the trophy.

"We are four goals behind, so we want to make the impossible possible, this is our goal for tomorrow," Flick told reporters.

"We all know that it's not easy but in the end we never give up, and we start this match (aiming) for a clean sheet, believing in

our strengths and that we can do it."

Barca thrashed Villarreal 4-1 on Saturday at Camp Nou in La Liga, with a hat-trick from teenager star Lamine Yamal, the first of his career.

Flick said the winger would be important against Atletico but the team as a whole needed to deliver for Barca to make a comeback.

"The team is always in focus," said Flick. "The first goal from him was a great recovery of the ball and a great pass from Fermin (Lopez). (Yamal) has the outstanding quality to score this goal and be in the right position at this moment."

"How he played after that was great to see, really happy about that, but in the end we need everyone, not only Lamine."