

Bahrain U18 gear up for Gulf Championship

TDT | Manama

Bahrain's national under-18 basketball team have begun preparations for the Gulf Championship qualifiers, which serve as the pathway to the FIBA U18 Asian Cup and will take place in Qatar from July 17 to 22.

The team opened their campaign with a training camp in Umm Al Hassam, attended by Bahrain Basketball Association vice-president Salman Hubail, board member Ahmed Kaldari, and the technical staff led by head coach Salman Ramadan.

All selected players were present for the first session, marking the start of the national team's build-up for the regional qualifiers and their bid to reach the continental stage.

Hubail and Kaldari observed the opening training session and met with players and staff, stressing the importance of the preparation phase and urging



Coach Ramadan guides his players during training

full focus to ensure peak physical and technical readiness ahead of the competition.

Under Ramadan's guidance, the coaching staff have begun implementing a structured training programme focused on improving fitness, tactical

discipline, and overall team performance in the lead-up to the tournament.

The Gulf Championship represents Bahrain's qualification route to the FIBA U18 Asian Cup, with the team aiming to compete strongly against the

region's top youth sides and secure a place at the continental event.

Preparations will continue in the coming weeks as the squad steps up its build-up towards the July competition in Qatar.

Seef open 2026 campaign in Bulgaria

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Bahrain's Seef 3x3 basketball team will kick off their 2026 international season this weekend by taking part in the Sofia Open 3x3 Palms Lite Quest in Bulgaria, marking their first appearance on this year's global circuit.

The tournament is officially sanctioned by FIBA and sits within the organisation's "Road to the World Tour" structure, bringing together a wide international field and offering teams a pathway into higher-tier events.

This year's Sofia competition features 24 teams from across Europe, North America and beyond. While the event does not grant direct access to a World Tour Masters, it carries added significance as a Lite Quest; the winning side earns qualification to the Caceres Challenger in Spain, set for July 11-12. Only the title winners will secure that progression.

Seef will line up with Bogdan Dragovic, Austin Ajukwa, Uros Ilic, and Isa Jassim forming the squad for the Bulgarian chal-



Bogdan Dragovic in action during a training session

lenge, as the team looks to build early-season rhythm against strong international opposition.

As part of their build-up, the Bahraini outfit has already set up a training base in Serbia,

where they are undergoing a short preparatory camp focused on conditioning, tactical work, and team coordination ahead of the competition.

Once their Sofia Open campaign concludes, Seef will remain in the region and return to Serbia to continue preparations for their next assignment on the FIBA 3x3 calendar — the Lion City Challenger in Singapore on June 20-21. That event also serves as a qualifying stop on the Road to the World Tour, with the top three teams earning places in the Lausanne Masters in Switzerland later in the season.

The FIBA 3x3 system continues to grow as a structured global pathway, featuring tiers ranging from Quest and Lite Quest events through to Challengers and elite Masters tournaments that make up the World Tour.

Bahrain has established a steady presence in the format in recent years, regularly competing in and hosting international stops, helping raise the country's profile within the fast-growing 3x3 scene.

Bahrain Begin Georgia Training Camp

TDT | Manama

Bahrain's senior men's national football team have begun their overseas training camp in Tbilisi after arriving in Georgia to continue preparations for upcoming international commitments.

The squad's European base follows their departure from Manama on Monday evening, marking the start of a preparatory phase that includes two friendly matches against strong opposition as part of their build-up for major tournaments



Waleed Al Hayyam in action on the training ground

ahead.

Head coach Dragan Talajic is overseeing the camp, which comes as Bahrain continue their structured preparation for the 27th Gulf Cup, where they will enter as defending champions, as well as the AFC Asian Cup 2027.

Upon arrival, the team have already begun their initial training sessions, focusing on ball work and tactical organisation as the coaching staff look to fine-tune both physical and technical aspects of the squad.

The delegation includes a 30-man roster, with players continuing to link up with the group in phases. A number of overseas-based professionals are expected to join directly in Georgia, strengthening the squad ahead of the first friendly.

Bahrain are scheduled to face hosts Georgia, ranked 72nd in the world, on Friday at Mikheil Meskhi Stadium in Tbilisi. The team will then travel to Antalya, Türkiye, for a second friendly against Syria on Tuesday at the Gloria Sports Arena.

Liverpool close to hiring Iraola: reports



Andoni Iraola

AFP | London

Liverpool are in advanced talks with former Bournemouth manager Andoni Iraola as they seek a replacement for Arne Slot, according to reports yesterday.

Iraola has emerged as Liverpool's top target to replace Slot, who was sacked on Saturday after a turbulent second season in charge.

Liverpool have reportedly agreed a deal in principle to bring the Spaniard, who left Bournemouth at the end of this season, to Anfield.

Sporting director Richard Hughes was heavily involved in hiring Iraola during his time at Bournemouth and is again spearheading the recruitment of the highly rated coach.

The Reds are believed to be keen to wrap up a deal with Iraola before the start of the World Cup next week, which would allow the 43-year-old a lengthy acclimatisation period before pre-season training.

Slot was sacked last weekend after Liverpool finished fifth in the Premier League, 25 points behind champions Arsenal.

The Dutchman had led Liverpool to the Premier League title in his debut season, but his follow-up campaign quickly turned into a nightmare.

The death of Liverpool forward Diogo Jota last year

25

points separated Liverpool from Premier League champions Arsenal leading to Arne Slot's sacking after just two seasons

had a huge impact at Anfield, while the club's £450 million (\$606 million) spending spree on new signings failed to pay off.

Slot's relationship with star forward Mohamed Salah also deteriorated, while Liverpool fans turned on the former Feyenoord manager due to his team's lifeless performances and poor results.

Liverpool's pursuit of Iraola is in line with the club's desire to move back towards the aggressive, attacking style used by Slot's predecessor Jurgen Klopp.

Iraola earned plaudits for Bournemouth's impressive sixth-place finish this season, which secured the club's first qualification for Europe in the Europa League.

He arrived at Bournemouth from Raya Valleciano in 2023, having previously managed Mirandes and AEK Larnaca.

Bournemouth improved each year under Iraola, finishing 12th, ninth and sixth.

Sotheby's to auction Pele jersey worn in 1958 World Cup



17-year-old Pele cries on the shoulder of the goalkeeper Gilmar after Brazil's 5-2 victory against Sweden in the 1958 World Cup final in Stockholm

AFP | New York

The jersey worn by late football legend Pele during Brazil's 1958 World Cup victory will headline an auction set to coincide with this year's tournament, Sotheby's announced yesterday.

Pele, then just 17 years old, scored two of Brazil's five goals

in the 1958 final against host nation Sweden.

The victory marked Brazil's first of a record five World Cup titles, three of which were won under the man who would become known as "The King."

Pele, born Edson Arantes do Nascimento, died in December 2022 at the age of 82 after being diagnosed with colon cancer.