

Spikers set for Asian challenge

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

Bahrain's senior men's volleyball team are set for their latest continental challenge as the AVC Volleyball Men's Continental Championship 2026 gets underway tomorrow in Fukuoka, Japan.

The kingdom's spikers are among 12 teams competing in the Asian Volleyball Confederation's premier men's competition, which runs until September 13.

Bahrain begin their Pool A campaign against Australia on Saturday at 4am, Bahrain time, before facing defending champions and hosts Japan on Sunday at 1.30pm.

They conclude the preliminary round against Gulf rivals Oman next yesterday at 4am.

The nationals head into the tournament following an overseas training camp in Seoul, where they played three international friendlies against South Korea as part of their final preparations.

Coached by Montenegro's



Coach Ivan Joksimovic addresses his players during a recent continental campaign

Ivan Joksimovic, the squad features 13 players for the continental showpiece.

Middle blockers Mohammed Abdulla, Hassan Haider and Ali Yusuf are joined by opposite spikers Ali Ebrahim and Abdulla Mohammed Jaafar; outside hitters Sayed Hashem Issa, Mahmood Abdulhussain, Mahmoud Abdulwahed and Ahmed Mohammed Saleh; setters Mahmood Alafyah and Ali Habib; and liberos Ayman Harwana and Abbas Sultan.

Joksimovic's men face a de-

manding route through the preliminary stage, with Japan entering as defending Asian champions and Australia another established continental side.

Pool B comprises Iran, China, India and New Zealand, while Pool C features Qatar, South Korea, Chinese Taipei and Thailand.

Following the single round-robin preliminary phase, the top two teams from each of the three pools will advance to the quarter-finals along with the two best third-placed sides.

The last eight will be played on September 10 and 11, followed by the semi-finals on September 12 and the medal matches the following day.

The Bahrainis earned their place in this year's championship after making history on home soil by winning the AVC Men's Cup 2025, their first title at any level of an AVC competition.

They have since continued their strong form, winning gold at the fourth GCC Games in Doha in May before finishing fourth at the AVC Men's Cup in Ahmedabad, India, in June.

The Fukuoka tournament will mark the kingdom's 12th appearance in the Asian men's championship. Bahrain finished 10th in 2021 before improving to eighth at the previous edition in Iran in 2023.

The stakes are particularly high this year, with the champions earning a direct quota place for the men's volleyball tournament at the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics, while the top three will qualify for the FIVB Men's Volleyball World Cup 2027.

Asian qualifying campaign continues for Bahrain



Full-time celebrations after Bahrain's winning start

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Bahrain face Jordan tonight in a key AFC U20 Asian Cup 2027 qualifier at Khalifa Sports City Stadium in Isa Town.

The match kicks off at 8.30pm and pits the early Group D leaders against each other after both made winning starts to their campaigns.

Ali Aamer's men beat Tajikistan 3-2 in their opener, with Ali Mahran scoring a hat-trick,

while Jordan claimed a 1-0 victory over Afghanistan.

A win tonight would put either side in a strong position ahead of Sunday's final round, with only the group winners guaranteed qualification for next year's finals in China.

Afghanistan and Tajikistan meet in tonight's earlier fixture at 5pm.

Bahrain will then close out their campaign against Afghanistan on Sunday at 8.30pm, after Jordan take on Tajikistan at 5pm.

Bahrain youth handball heroes return

Asian silver medallists welcomed home after historic campaign in Jordan



Bahrain's U19 handball team upon arrival with BHF president Ali Issa Eshaqi and BOC officials

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Bahrain's youth men's national team returned home to a warm welcome following their impressive run at the 11th Asian Men's Youth Handball Championship in Amman, Jordan.

The Bahrain Olympic Committee (BOC) received the squad on their arrival in the

kingdom after the youngsters claimed silver and booked their place at next year's IHF Men's Youth Handball World Championship.

Their campaign ended with a 28-24 defeat to Gulf rivals Qatar in the title clash at Princess Sumaya Hall.

The runners-up finish was the kingdom's first in the history of the Asian Handball Federation's under-19 competition,

adding to titles won in 2016 and 2018 and a bronze medal in 2010.

Coached by Egyptian tactician Mohamed Abdelrahman Soliman, the Bahrainis had gone unbeaten throughout the tournament until the final.

Their quarter-final victory over Saudi Arabia secured qualification for the 2027 youth worlds, before they overcame

Iran in the semi-finals to set up the meeting with Qatar.

Two players also returned with individual honours. Ahmed Abdulla was named the tournament's best centre back, while Mohammed Marzooq received the best left wing award.

Next year's global event, scheduled for July 29 to August 9, will mark the nationals' seventh appearance overall and fifth in succession.

Ramadhan stays on at Manama

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Bahraini coach Salman Ramadhan will continue at the helm of Manama's senior men's basketball team for a second successive season.

The decision provides continuity for the capital club after Ramadhan guided them to two runners-up finishes last campaign.

Manama finished second in both the Zain Bahrain Basketball League and the Khalifa bin Salman Cup, while placing considerable trust in home-grown players and members of the club's youth ranks.

Ramadhan also enjoyed a busy summer at the helm of Bahrain's under-18 national team, beginning with a successful title defence at the 23rd Arab Youth Men's Basketball Championship in Sfax, Tunisia, in July.

The following month, he guided the nationals to second place in Group B at the Fiba U18 Asia Cup in Ahmedabad, India, after recording two wins from three games.



Coach Salman Ramadhan leads a recent training session

That earned Bahrain a place in the quarter-final play-offs, where their run came to an end following a 109-99 defeat to Chinese Taipei, leaving them ninth overall.

Ramadhan will now turn his attention back to Manama, with preparations under way for the new domestic campaign.

The 2026-27 Zain Bahrain Basketball League is scheduled to tip off on October 4, with Manama looking to go one better after last season's runners-up finish.

They are also set to face champions Muharraq in the Bahrain Basketball Super Cup on October 23.

Stephen Loman assembles elite corner for BRAVE CF 108 campaign

Manama

Stephen "The Sniper" Loman is leaving nothing to chance as he prepares for the most consequential fight of his illustrious career, surrounding himself with two trusted figures who understand his game from the inside out.

The former BRAVE CF Bantamweight World Champion will face No. 1-ranked divisional contender Lasha Abramishvili in the co-main event of BRAVE CF 108, which takes place live from the historic Pula Arena in Croatia on Saturday, September 5.

Joining Loman for the pivotal assignment are Filipino mixed martial arts icon Eduard "Landslide" Folleyang and BRAVE CF alumnus Jeremy "The Juggernaut" Pacatiw.



"I'm happy that I'll be with them. I really need people who truly understand my game and have been with me throughout

camp. It's good because they can see the adjustments I need to make in the fight," Loman said.

The formidable entourage re-

flects the magnitude of Loman's comeback.

This will be his first fight in three years and his first appearance under the BRAVE CF banner since successfully defending his then-bantamweight crown against Louie "Leonidas" Sannoudakis at BRAVE CF 30 in November 2019.

Folleyang, widely regarded as "The Face of Philippine MMA," played a pivotal role in the sport's popularity in the country during its formative years.

The legendary "Landslide" also captured the World Title twice at lightweight.

Pacatiw, meanwhile, knows the BRAVE CF cage intimately, having competed for the promotion 10 times between 2016 and 2019.

"The Juggernaut" also holds

the distinction of being the only athlete in BRAVE CF history to have traveled to and fought in more countries than any other competitor.

Yet their presence is not merely a showcase of star power. Loman has assembled his corner with a specific purpose: to eliminate blind spots and ensure every contingency is addressed.

"Of course, there are things that I might not see or notice during the fight. I need them to be my voice of reason while I'm in there. At the same time, I want them with me to make sure I'm completely ready before I step into the cage," he explained.

The urgency is underscored by Abramishvili's remarkable ascent.

Since Loman stepped away in 2023, the Georgian spitfire has

won eight straight fights, six by stoppage. Four of those victories have come inside the BRAVE CF cage, propelling him to a formidable 12-2-1 record.

Loman, therefore, knows precisely what awaits him this weekend.

The bout also marks another milestone in his personal evolution. For the first time as a competitor, he will represent Lions Nation MMA, the stable founded by Folleyang alongside Kevin "The Silencer" Belington, Honorio "The Rock" Banario, and Joshua "The Passion" Pacio following their departure from Team Lakay in 2023.

"I'm happy because this is a new chapter for me. At the same time, I'm excited to represent the team. So I'll really do my best," Loman stated.