

Bahrain 'focused on next game' in Gulf Cup title-defence

Head coach Helio Sousa stresses that defending champions are taking things one game at a time as they next take on Qatar in 25th Arab Gulf Cup in Basra, Iraq

● Bahrain to clash with Qatar at 7.15pm at Al Minaa Olympic Stadium

● UAE and Kuwait to face off in other Group B match starting at 4.15pm

TDT | Manama



Helio Sousa speaks during his pre-game Press conference yesterday

Bahrain are taking their title-defence one game at a time at the 25th Arab Gulf Cup, says head coach Helio Sousa as they get set to face off with Qatar in their second Group B fixture of the tournament tonight.

Speaking in his pre-match Press conference yesterday, Sousa said that the nationals are not looking too far ahead in the competition, in which they are the defending champions, but are focused solely on their upcoming opponents.

"We are focused on the next game; not thinking right now

on the title," Sousa stressed. "We are taking it game by game before we get the chance to fight for the title again.

"One game went our way, as we wanted and as we prepared to do it, but we know that we are now facing a strong team with good quality players.

"They will bring different problems than Emirates."

The Bahrainis defeated the UAE 2-1 in their opening contest last Saturday, while the Qataris were also winners in

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HELIO SOUSA

their first outing, beating Kuwait 2-0.

"We are thinking mostly of ourselves as always and preparing for the next game to win again," Sousa added.

"If we win, we will be more near to reach the next stage of the competition, and more near to fight for the title again. But mostly it is the next game we are more concerned about at this moment."

Sousa said that his side felt added pressure in their game against the Emiratis, being the reigning title-holders.

"It is always difficult the first



Bahrain players warming up during their training yesterday

games of short competitions, but this time it was even more so because it was the first time as a team that we were winners of the previous competition, and that makes it different for sure," Sousa explained. "Expectations are on us and the players."

The Portuguese tactician said that while the national team has shown great development

over the last few years, there is still plenty of room for them to continue growing—something they can only achieve together.

"The last time Bahrain won against the UAE was before 2010," he said. "The people see us as very good, but we are not so strong yet as the results sometimes show.

"We need to be consistent to be as strong as some of the other teams around us. But that shows the development that is being made, and all of us on the Bahrain national team must support the guys who are doing a fantastic job, and give them a good bed for them to lay down and be better for the future,

"That, we can only do it all together, all wishing for the same side."

Bahrain's match with Qatar tonight is scheduled for a 7.15pm kick-off, Bahrain time, at Al Minaa Olympic Stadium in Basra. Prior to the game, the UAE and Kuwait face off at 4.15pm.

The last match day in Group B is then scheduled for Friday, when Bahrain take on Kuwait at Basra International Stadium and Qatar face the UAE at Al Minaa, both kicking off simultaneously at 6pm.

The top two teams move on to the semi-finals on Monday next week, with the final scheduled for 19 January.

BRAVE CF announces Fighter of The Year nominees for 2022

● Katona, Bandel, Lutterbach, Almabaev, Hanekom make the list

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BRAVE Combat Federation has announced the nominees to one of its most prestigious awards: BRAVE CF 2022 Fighter of the Year. BRAVE CF gladiators did not make it easy this time as copious amounts of stars argued a compelling case who should earn the title of the most-global promotion's elite fighter for 2022.

BRAVE CF Bantamweight champion Brad Katona silenced many critics when he erased all doubts about him being the king of the division. Katona handled his business with big wins over Bahrain's Hamza Kooheji and his training partner Gamzat Magomedov to earn and retain the 135-pound belt this year.

Former number-three ranked Super Welterweight Marcin Bandel did not waste any time this year. The Pole beat Brazil's Luis Felipe Dias via unanimous decision before shocking the world with an incredible armbar over crowd favorite and number-two ranked Super Welterweight Ismail Naurdiev to earn the vacant BRAVE CF



Fighter of The Year

Brad Katona
Marcin Bandel
Joilton Lutterbach
Asu Almabaev
Chad Hanekom

why he is set for great things in the BRAVE CF Flyweight division when he recorded three wins (one stoppage and two decisions) in 2022. His all-out action is a must for global fans, and his last submission (rear-naked choke) win over the Philippines' Kenneth Maningat highlighted his plans of dominating the 125-pound division and wrapping that vacant belt around his waist.

Last - but not least - South Africa's Chad Hanekom convinced the world that he would never let a title slip through his hands again. After suffering that disappointing BRAVE CF Middleweight title loss in South Africa, Hanekom has been on a warpath to secure his status as the king of the 185-pound division. This year he came back with a vengeance as he dominated Mateusz Janur over three rounds before the number-two-ranked South African ended the year with a bang with a colossal "hellbow" over the dangerous South Korean In Jae La at BRAVE CF 66 in November.

175-pound title.

Brazil's Joilton Lutterbach came in and rocked the show from day one. His first show-stopping event was when he was called in as a late replacement to fight the former number-one ranked Super Lightweight and Germany's Marcel Grabinski. Lutterbach quickly proved that he is more than just a filler-fighter when

he stopped Grabinski via strikes in the first round of their BRAVE CF 61 main event fight. He then sent a strong message to the undisputed Super Lightweight champion, Eldar Eldarov, after he TKO'd the dangerous Moldovan, Mihail Cotruta in the first round of their BRAVE CF 68 bout last year.

Kazakhstan's Asu Almabaev reminded BRAVE Nation fans

Wales captain Bale announces end of playing career

Reuters | London

Wales and Los Angeles FC winger Gareth Bale said yesterday he had decided to end his playing career at the age of 33.

Bale played a Wales record of 111 games for his country and was a five-time Champions League winner with Real Madrid. He helped the Welsh reach the 2016 and 2020 Euros before leading them in their first World Cup since 1958 at Qatar 2022.

"After careful and thoughtful consideration, I announce my immediate retirement from club and international football," Bale said on Twitter.

"I feel incredibly fortunate to have realised my dream of playing the sport I love. It has truly given me some of the best moments of my life.

"The highest of highs over 17 seasons, that will be impossible to replicate, no matter what the next chapter has in store for me."

Bale started his senior career at then Championship side Southampton, which introduced the 17-year-old to professional football before he moved to Tottenham Hotspur two years later.

After six seasons in the Premier League, Bale was signed by Real Madrid for a fee reported by British media as a world record of 100 million euros (\$107.45 million).

"From my very first touch at



Gareth Bale

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GARETH BALE

Southampton to my last with LAFC and everything in between, shaped a club career that I have an immense pride and gratitude for," Bale added.

"Playing for and captaining my country 111 times has truly been a dream come true."

The player released a separate statement to bid farewell to the Welsh fans and team, saying his decision to retire from international football had been "by far the hardest of my career."