

Bahrain face Qatar, Saudi in Asia Cup warm-ups

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TDT | Manama

Bahrain will put their Asia Cup hopes through one last Gulf test in Doha next week, taking on Qatar and Saudi Arabia just days before their qualifying campaign begins in Dubai.

The Reds face hosts Qatar on Thursday, August 20, before meeting Saudi Arabia on Friday, August 21, in a three-team warm-up tournament. Both games start at 7pm Bahrain time at Al Janoub Stadium hall.

The short Doha stay is the final match test before Bahrain head to the UAE for the first round of the FIBA Asia Cup 2029 pre-qualifiers.

Bahrain have been drawn with the UAE, Kuwait, Oman and Nepal and open against Oman on August 27. The UAE follow a day later, before games against Nepal on August 30 and Kuwait on August 31.

Three teams from the group



National basketball team trains ahead of its upcoming international fixtures

will go through to the second qualifying round.

That leaves little room for a slow start and gives the Qatar and Saudi matches added weight. The coaching staff will use them to judge form, cut down mistakes and sharpen defensive work before the first points are at stake.

The squad has continued training in Bahrain, with work centred on fitness, ball control and team play.

Two Gulf opponents should also offer a useful gauge. Bahrain will meet three more Gulf sides in Dubai, with Oman, the UAE and Kuwait all standing between the Reds and a place in the next round.

Bahrain are trying to fight their way back to the continental finals after missing the 2025 Asia Cup in Jeddah. Their last qualifying run ended with defeats by India and Iraq.

The senior side also has the 2026 Asian Games in Nagoya on its calendar later this year.

Somali referee denied World Cup ‘proud’ to oversee UEFA Super Cup



Somalian referee Omar Artan

AFP | Salzburg

Somali referee denied World Cup ‘proud’ to oversee UEFA Super Cup.

Before the World Cup started in June, the 34-year-old referee unwittingly found himself in the media spotlight after being turned away on arrival at Miami International Airport, despite being part of the panel of referees selected by FIFA for the tournament.

“It was a very tough period,” Artan said in an interview published on the UEFA website.

“A lot of people have sympathy for me, because when someone has been working a lot of years and is supposed to do something, and then can’t do it, it’s very challenging.”

A US State Department official told AFP that the referee was “associated with suspected members of terrorist organizations”, therefore “making the traveler ineligible

for admission to the United States”.

These allegations were rejected by the referee and caused outrage in Somalia, where Artan had been welcomed as a hero on his return.

“It is unfortunate what happened to the referee from Somalia,” FIFA president Gianni Infantino said at the time, adding: “We don’t control everything.”

In response, UEFA, the governing body of European football, announced that Artan would referee the UEFA Super Cup, which pits Champions League winners PSG against the Europa League winners Aston Villa.

“I was lucky, but I have worked very hard to be here and I’m really proud,” Artan told UEFA.

“As you can imagine, I grew up in a difficult situation, but it didn’t prevent me from pursuing my dreams.”

Johnson signs for Everton in McNeil swap deal

AFP | London

Everton and Crystal Palace announced yesterday that they had completed a swap deal involving wingers Brennan Johnson and Dwight McNeil.

Wales international Johnson,

who has signed a four-year contract at David Moyes’ Everton, only joined Palace in January in a £35 million (\$47 million) move from Tottenham.

The 25-year-old was an unused substitute in the London club’s UEFA Conference League final

success, 12 months after scoring Spurs’ winning goal in their Europa League final victory.

“There were a lot of reasons why I was so keen to join -- the manager, the players, the direction the team is going in,” Johnson told Everton TV.



Brennan Johnson

Notts Forest owner Marinakis sues Palace over gun banner - reports



Nottingham Forest owner Evangelos Marinakis

AFP | London

Nottingham Forest owner Evangelos Marinakis is suing Crystal Palace over a banner unfurled by the London club’s fans depicting him holding a gun to midfielder Morgan Gibbs-White’s head, according to reports.

Marinakis’ legal team lodged the defamation claim against Palace and “persons unknown” at the High Court in London on Monday, nearly a year on from the banner being displayed during the 1-1 Premier League clash between the two clubs at Selhurst Park.

Alongside the image, the banner read: “Mr Marinakis is not involved in blackmail, match-fixing, drug trafficking or corruption.”

The Greek shipping and media magnate has consistently denied any wrongdoing in relation to such allegations.

In November 2025, the Football Association charged Palace with failing to ensure that supporters did not behave in an improper, offensive, abusive or provocative way and later fined the club £50,000 (\$67,000).

The game on August 24 last year took place amid heightened tensions after Forest had taken Palace’s place in the Europa League after the south London club were relegated to the Conference League for breaking UEFA’s multi-club ownership rules.

Marinakis, a 59-year-old Greek businessman, also owns Olympiacos in Greece and Rio Ave in Portugal.

Para lifters test readiness



The Bahrain Paralympic Committee, in cooperation with the Bahrain Disabled Sports Federation, is holding the Bahrain Paralympic Weightlifting Championship at Sports City as part of preparations for upcoming international competitions. The championship features elite athletes and provides Bahrain’s national team an opportunity to assess their technical and physical readiness ahead of major events, particularly the Asian Para Games in Nagoya and the World Championships to be hosted by Bahrain. The competition also aims to help athletes improve their performance and strengthen Bahrain’s presence in Paralympic weightlifting at the Asian and international levels.