

Abdulwahed inspires Bahrain comeback to open title defence

Bahrain men's volleyball team celebrate opening win over Chinese Taipei

TDT | Manama

Bahrain began their 2026 AVC Men's Cup title defence with a 3-1 victory over Chinese Taipei in their Pool A opener in Ahmedabad, India, yesterday.

The defending champions were forced to come from behind after dropping the first set 25-22, before responding to take the next three 25-23, 25-22, 25-20 in a competitive match decided by fine margins.

Chinese Taipei started more sharply, using sustained pressure through Wen Yi-Kai and

Huang Jeng-Liang to edge the opening set. Bahrain struggled to find early fluency in attack but improved in the second set as Mahmood Abdulwahed became more involved and Ali Ebrahim helped steady the side, allowing them to level the match.

Bahrain took control in the third set after tightening their work at the net and improving their transition play. Abdulwahed remained the main attacking outlet as they moved ahead in the contest.

In the fourth set, Bahrain

were more composed in the closing stages, limiting Chinese Taipei's scoring runs and managing key rallies to close out the win.

Head coach Ivan Joksimovic, who guided Bahrain to gold at last month's GCC Games, began his second tournament in charge with a victory.

Abdulwahed finished as Bahrain's top scorer with 21 points from 61, including 19 attacks, one block and one ace. Mahmood AlAfyah added 13 points and Hasan Al Warqaa contributed nine.

Wen Yi-Kai led Chinese Taipei with 21 points, while Huang Jeng-Liang added 19, but Bahrain's stronger finishing across the final three sets proved decisive.

Bahrain now face New Zealand today at 9:30am Bahrain time as they continue their push for a semi-final place.

The AVC Men's Cup 2026 runs until June 28, with the semi-finals on June 27 and the medal matches the following day.

Mahmood Abdulwahed celebrates after winning a point

Omrzel shines on home roads



Bahrain Victorious' Jakob Omrzel in action at the Tour of Slovenia

● Jakob Omrzel aims to defend jersey

● Moves into overall top three

Bahrain Victorious Development Team rider Jakob Omrzel delivered another impressive performance on home roads, finishing third on Stage 4 of the Tour of Slovenia and moving onto the overall podium with one stage remaining.

The Slovenian National Champion excelled on the race's queen stage, a demanding 184.7-kilometre route from Kranj to Kranjska Gora featuring three categorised climbs and soaring temperatures.

The action came on the iconic Vrši climb, where the day's breakaway was caught before Florian Lipowitz of Red Bull-BORA-hansgrohe launched a race-winning attack. His teammate Giulio Pellizzari later joined him at the front, and the pair maintained their advantage to the finish, crossing the line together with Lipowitz taking the stage victory and the overall race lead.

Behind the leading duo, Omrzel showcased his climbing abilities on the steep gradients of Vrši. The 20-year-old rode strongly to secure third place on the stage, finishing 1 minute and 26 seconds behind the leaders.

The result lifted Omrzel to third in the general classification and saw him take over the white jersey as the race's best young rider.

"I feel a bit exhausted, which is normal after a day like this," Omrzel said. "I had really good sensations throughout the stage. I was hoping to get back to Lipowitz and Pellizzari, but they were stronger today. Overall, I'm very happy with my performance and I'm looking forward to the final stage."

Sports Director Borut Boži praised the young Slovenian's ride.

"Jakob did a great job on the final climb," Boži said. "When he realised their pace was too much for him, he wisely settled into his own rhythm. He rode within his limits and fully deserved to hold on to third place."

The Tour of Slovenia concludes today with Stage 5 in Novo Mesto, where Omrzel will look to defend both his white jersey and his place on the overall podium.

Seef qualify for Lion City Challenger quarter-finals

● A win would send the Bahraini side into the semi-finals, also scheduled for today at 1:30pm

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Bahrain's 3x3 team Seef will enter the knockout stage of the Lion City Challenger 2026 today, taking on unbeaten Japanese side Shibuya in the quarter-finals at 12:50pm Bahrain time, after a demanding group campaign in Singapore.

The Bahraini quartet of Bogdan Dragovic, Kelechi Austin Ajukwa, Uroš Ili, and Isa Jasim secured their place in the last



Uros Ilic dunks during Seef's second match against hosts Singapore

eight after finishing Pool A with one win and a narrow defeat in the FIBA 3x3 World Tour event.

Their opening game ended

in a heartbreaking 21-20 loss to Antwerp, a tightly contested encounter that swung both ways before Jonas Foerts sealed victory at the free-throw line in the

closing seconds. Ajukwa led Seef with 8 points, while Dragovic added 7 points and 5 rebounds. Ili contributed 5 points and 10 rebounds, anchoring the paint and keeping the team competitive throughout.

Seef responded with a more composed performance against hosts Singapore, winning 20-14. Ili was the standout performer with 12 points, 7 rebounds, 3 assists, and 2 blocks, setting the tone at both ends of the floor. Ajukwa also added 5 points for Bahrain's representatives in a controlled team display.

Those results were enough for Seef to advance to the knockout rounds, where the level of competition now rises sharply. Their next challenge, however, is a formidable one.

Shibuya arrive in strong form, unbeaten across four games on day one, including both qualifying and Pool C fixtures. Their perfect record positions them among the tournament favourites and sets up a demanding test of Seef's defensive discipline and composure under pressure.

A win would send the Bahraini side into the semi-finals, also scheduled for today at 1:30pm, with the final set for 3pm. The tournament is the first-ever edition of the Lion City Challenger and also serves as a qualifier for the FIBA 3x3 World Tour Lausanne Masters in Switzerland on August 14 and 15, where the top three teams will secure qualification for the premier event.

Neymar? He is working remotely at the World Cup, jokes Lula

Rio De Janeiro, Brazil

Brazilian star Neymar is "the first player in the world to be called up to the national side and be working remotely", Brazil President Luiz Inacio Lula de Silva joked on Friday.

Neymar, Brazil's record goalscorer with 79 goals, only returned to training with the squad at the World Cup in the United States this week after recovering from a calf injury.

The 34-year-old missed the opening 1-1 draw with Morocco and has also been omitted

by coach Carlo Ancelotti from the squad for their second group game against Haiti later on Friday.

"Neymar? He is not even playing!" Lula replied to a young boy when he mentioned Neymar's name.

"Neymar is the first player to be called up (to the national team) who is working remotely," added the 80-year-old, who was speaking during a ceremony at a hospital in the southeast city of Belo Horizonte.

Lula has been in fine form since the Morocco match, joking on Wednesday that

he was thinking of signing Argentinian superstar Lionel Messi to play for Brazil.

The former Barcelona and Paris Saint Germain striker was diagnosed in late May with an injury to his right calf, and has featured in just half of the games for his club Santos this year due to various fitness issues.

Ancelotti and his coaching staff are reluctant to rush the return of Brazil's all-time record goalscorer and compromise his availability for

matches later in the tournament, according to Brazilian media.

Neymar, who has not played for his country since October 2023, did train with his teammates for the first time on Wednesday.

He has been an integral part of Brazil's last three World Cup campaigns but there was some surprise at his inclusion this time owing to his series of injuries.

Brazil's final group stage game is against Scotland in Miami on June 24.

