



# Bahrain ready for Arab U18 Basketball Championship opener

TDT | Manama

Bahrain's youth national basketball team are set to begin their campaign at the 23rd Arab U18 Basketball Championship 2026 today when they take on Algeria at 3:15pm Bahrain time in Sfax, Tunisia.

The Bahraini delegation arrived in Tunisia on Thursday and has since completed its preparations, holding training sessions ahead of the tournament opener.

The championship, which runs until July 4, is organised by the Arab Basketball Confederation (ABC) in cooperation with the Tunisian Basketball Federation and features six teams: Bahrain, Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Egypt and hosts Tunisia. All matches are being played at Raed Al Bajawi Hall in Sfax.

Bahrain are led by veteran coach Salman Ramadhan, who has selected a 14-player squad spearheaded by promising talents Somto Patrick Onoduenyi and Hassan Abdulkadir. The



Coach Ramadan overseeing training in Tunisia yesterday

squad also includes Hussain Al Samahiji, Ali Khalil, Mujtaba Rayyan, Mohammed Adel, Hussain Fuad and Ali Ferdousi. Following today's opener

against Algeria, Bahrain will face hosts Tunisia on Sunday at 5:30pm, before taking on Libya on Monday at 1pm.

After a rest day on Tuesday, they will resume their campaign against Morocco on Wednesday at 1pm, before concluding the preliminary round against Egypt on Thursday at 3:15pm. All match times are Bahrain time.

The tournament is being played in a single round-robin format, with the top two teams advancing to the gold medal match, while the third- and fourth-placed teams will contest the bronze medal.

The competition forms an important part of Bahrain's preparations for the Gulf Basketball Association (GBA) U18 Championship, which will be held in Doha, Qatar, from July 17 to 22.

The regional tournament will serve as a qualifier for the FIBA U18 Asia Cup 2026 in Ahmedabad, India, with the top three teams earning places at the continental championship scheduled for August 13 to 23.

## Bidzina Gavashelishvili takes on Luthando Biko in BRAVE CF 107 co-headliner



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I belong among the best at flyweight."

BRAVE Combat Federation™ (BRAVE CF), the world's fastest-growing and most global mixed martial arts organization, has announced an intriguing flyweight clash for the co-main event of BRAVE CF 107, as Georgian standout Bidzina Gavashelishvili squares off against South Africa's Luthando "Shorty" Biko on Saturday, August 1, at Burgas Arena in Bulgaria.

Held in partnership with Bulgarian Fight Agency (BFA), the upcoming showcase marks the promotion's highly anticipated return to Bulgarian soil and promises a night packed with world-class action. Among the marquee attractions is a long-awaited meeting between two accomplished flyweights whose careers have been on a collision course for more than two years.

Bidzina Gavashelishvili, BRAVE CF Flyweight Athlete, stated: "This is exactly the kind of opportunity every athlete works for. I am grateful to BRAVE CF for putting me in this position. The flyweight division is filled with elite competitors, and a victory here will move me one step closer to where I want to be. I am excited to showcase my abilities and continue climbing the rankings."

Luthando Biko, BRAVE CF Flyweight Athlete, stated: "I appreciate BRAVE CF for giving me this platform. Facing someone of Bidzina's caliber is the type of challenge that motivates me. He is one of the top athletes in the division, and this is an opportunity to test myself against the very best. I am ready to prove that

Gavashelishvili enters the contest carrying a professional record of 15-4, highlighted by six submission victories and two finishes by knockout. The Georgian spitfire has steadily built momentum inside the BRAVE CF cage, emerging victorious in three of his last four appearances.

His latest performance came at BRAVE CF 99 in October 2025, where he nabbed a hard-fought unanimous decision triumph over Alperen "The Demigod" Karabulut. That result further strengthened his standing in one of the organization's deepest and most competitive weight classes.

Tasked with halting his momentum is the battle-tested Biko, who owns a win-loss card of 13-5 with four knockout victories to his name. A seasoned mixed martial artist known for his toughness and determination, the South African featured twice under the BRAVE CF banner in 2025, splitting those outings while gaining valuable experience against top-level opposition.

As the flyweight landscape continues to evolve, Biko now seeks to establish consistency and place himself firmly in the conversation among the division's leading contenders.

The matchup carries added intrigue due to its history. Gavashelishvili and Biko were originally scheduled to meet at BRAVE CF 82 in May 2024, but the bout was ultimately canceled before the two men could settle their differences inside the cage. More than a year later, fate has brought them back together.

## Anderson to join Man City from Forest for British record fee: reports

AFP | London

Manchester City have agreed a potential British record transfer fee to sign England midfielder Elliot Anderson from fellow Premier League club Nottingham Forest, according to several media reports on Thursday.

Britain's Press Association and the BBC reported that City had agreed a fee which could rise to £130 million (\$171.5 million) for the 23-year-old.

The current highest transfer fee paid by a British club was the £125 million Liverpool spent to bring Alexander Isak to Anfield from Newcastle last year.

Forest had reportedly rejected

**130m**  
pounds is the potential British record transfer fee Manchester City have agreed to pay for the midfielder

two previous offers from Man City for Anderson.

He is currently in the United States with the England World Cup squad, but the move could be officially confirmed before the end of the tournament.

The central midfielder told BBC Sport this week that he was

focusing on the national side rather than his future at club level.

"It's pretty easy really, I'm just focusing on the present, I'm blocking it all out," he said.

"I've got a plan and it's to perform for England. I'm putting myself in the best position to cross the line and do that."

England face Panama in their final Group L game in New Jersey on Saturday, by when they may already have been assured of a place in the last 32.

Anderson started both their opening 4-2 win over Croatia and the subsequent goal-less draw with Ghana.

England manager Thomas Tuchel de-

scribed Anderson as the "full package" during the team's World Cup preparation camp and expressed confidence that City's interest would not distract him.



Elliot Anderson

## Antonelli sets pace ahead of McLaren duo in tight Austrian practice

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Kimi Antonelli ended Friday on top of the timesheets in second practice for the Austrian Grand Prix, leading a closely matched field headed by McLaren pair Oscar Piastri and Lando Norris at the Red Bull Ring in Spielberg.

The Mercedes rookie, who had already impressed earlier in the day, underlined his strong form by becoming the first driver to dip into the 1 minute 07s, setting a best lap of 1 minute 07.014 seconds.

Piastri emerged as Antonelli's nearest challenger, finishing 0.237 seconds adrift, while Norris was 0.325 seconds off the benchmark as McLaren recovered from a quieter FP1 to look far more competitive in the afternoon. The session, held in slightly cooler conditions, saw several regulars return after sitting out FP1 for rookies, including Ferrari's Charles Leclerc,



who resumed duties as the team continued to gather data on a new power unit.

Early on, Audi briefly hit the front with Nico Hulkenberg and Gabriel Bortoleto, although Hulkenberg's first effort was compromised by a wide moment

that hinted at lingering braking issues. Norris set the initial serious pace on medium tyres with a 1 minute 08.000 seconds lap, before the session was interrupted when Sergio Perez's Cadillac ground to a halt at Turn 6, triggering a Virtual Safety Car and disrupting the American team's upgrade programme.

The stoppage allowed Max Verstappen to address discomfort with his seat before rejoining. Once running resumed, Antonelli moved to the fore, breaking into the 1 minute 07s and tightening his grip as teams switched focus to soft-tyre runs. Piastri briefly took over at the top during the qualifying simulations,

only for Antonelli to respond immediately and then improve again to secure the fastest time of the day.

Behind the leading trio, Verstappen salvaged fourth place, followed by Lewis Hamilton in fifth and George Russell in sixth for Mercedes. Isack Hadjar impressed in

seventh, with Leclerc eighth, 0.841 seconds off Antonelli's time, ahead of Liam Lawson and Bortoleto completing the top 10. Further back, Pierre Gasly headed Arvid Lindblad, Ollie Bearman, Hulkenberg and Esteban Ocon, while Franco Colapinto, Alex Albon, Carlos Sainz, Fernando Alonso and

Lance Stroll filled the remaining midfield positions.

Cadillac endured a bruising session, with both Perez and Valtteri Bottas sidelined by technical problems, the latter returning to the pits with smoke and a small fire on his car's floor. With neither driver able to resume, the team ended the day routed to the bottom of the order and facing a substantial overnight repair task. Teams will now analyse the data from Friday's running before final practice and qualifying on Saturday, when Antonelli and McLaren look poised to resume their fight at the front.



Mercedes' Italian driver Kimi Antonelli drives during the first practice