

# 2026 WEC 8 Hours of Bahrain called off

Middle East situation prompts decision; full refunds to be issued automatically

Manama

**L**e Mans Endurance Management has announced that the 2026 WEC Bacpo Energies 8 Hours of Bahrain will not take place.

The decision follows detailed discussions between all parties involved and comes as a result of the current situation across the Middle East.

Shaikh Salman bin Isa Al Khalifa, Chief Executive of the Bahrain International Circuit said: "Over recent weeks, we have been in close coordination with our colleagues at WEC and other stakeholders. Whilst we are naturally disappointed not to be hosting the pinnacle of world endurance racing in



2026, we support the decision, which is in the best interests of all involved."

"On behalf of all of us at BIC, I thank all the WEC community

for their support and we look forward to welcoming the return of the series next year, together with fans from all around the world."



Shaikh Salman bin Isa Al Khalifa

## Important information for ticketholders

Customers who have bought

tickets or hospitality for the 2026 WEC Bacpo Energies 8 Hours of Bahrain will receive a full refund. Ticketholders

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SHAIKH SALMAN BIN ISA AL KHALIFA

do not need to contact BIC to facilitate a refund, as this will be done automatically over the coming days. For any enquiries, please call BIC's contact centre on +973 1745 0000.

# ‘Only job I wanted’, says new France coach Zidane

World Cup winner Zidane signs four-year deal with French national team

● Legend replaces long-serving manager Didier Deschamps

● Coach rejects club offers for national role

● Zidane debuts against Turkey in September

AFP | Paris

**Z**inedine Zidane was appointed France coach yesterday, as widely expected, following the departure of Didier Deschamps, the French Football Federation (FFF) announced.

Zidane, 54, had long been viewed as the leading candidate for the role and had

**”** I’ve had offers over these four or five years to take charge of a club and I turned them all down for the French national team

ZINEDINE ZIDANE

been waiting for an opportunity to take charge of the national team for several years.

He will replace Deschamps, whose tenure began in 2012 and ended earlier this month after France finished fourth at the World Cup.

Deschamps guided France to 2018 World Cup glory and the final four years later.

"For me, it's an immense joy... being able to become the coach of this French team. I don't have any other words," said Zidane, who takes over on a four-year deal that runs until the 2030 World Cup co-hosted by Spain, Portugal and Morocco.

"I'm holding myself back because I have so many emotions inside me. I'm ready for the challenge, that's what drives me today."

Former Real Madrid star Zidane, who was Deschamps' teammate in the 1998 World Cup triumph, has been readying himself for the role since leaving Real Madrid in 2021.

"The France job was the only one I wanted," Zidane said at his unveiling in Paris, where he signed autographs and took photos with fans waiting

**3** consecutive Champions League titles were won by Zidane as Real Madrid coach

outside the FFF headquarters after his appointment.

"I've had offers over these four or five years to take charge of a club and I turned them all down for the French national team."

The former France playmaker, who scored twice in the 1998 World Cup final victory over Brazil and also won the 2000 European Championship as a player, has coached only one club, Real Madrid.

## ‘Completely different job’

During his time with the Spanish giants, he led them to three consecutive Champions League titles in 2016, 2017 and 2018, an unprecedented achievement in the competition's modern era.

"I think it's a completely different job, that's for sure," said Zidane. "I've experienced the club side of it. Now this is something new for me, but it doesn't scare me."

Zidane will follow in the footsteps of former international team-mates Laurent Blanc, who coached the national side from 2010 to 2012, and Deschamps.

"I'm going to give everything so that this team keeps on winning. That's it, the only thing that drives me is being able to work for this France team and making sure it keeps on winning."

## Mancini returns as coach of crisis-hit Italy

AFP | Rome

**R**oberto Mancini has been named the head coach of Italy's national team for a second time, tasked with revitalising the Azzurri who have missed out on the last three World Cups, FIGC president Giovanni Malago said yesterday.

Technical director Roberto Maldini, who reportedly threatened to resign if Mancini was appointed, has been replaced by Claudio Ranieri.

"Today we have a new coach and a new technical director," Malago told reporters, announcing another press conference with Mancini and Ranieri on Wednesday.

"I felt that the person who should be and become the Italian national football team's head coach was Roberto Mancini, for a whole series of considerations for which, as always, I honestly take responsibility."

Gennaro Gattuso resigned as Italy coach after their World Cup qualification play-off final defeat by Bosnia and Herzegovina in March.

The 61-year-old Mancini was previously Italy boss from 2018 until 2023, leading them to the Euro 2020 title.

He has been preferred to another ex-national team coach in Antonio Conte.

Maldini had also apparently said he would resign if Conte was chosen, reportedly wanting Brazil-born former Italy midfielder Thiago Motta to be given the job.

Andrea Pirlo, who had been tipped to take charge, announced on Monday that he was no longer a candidate.



**Mancini's appointment remains divisive inside Italian football because of his abrupt 2023 departure for Saudi Arabia and the way it unsettled the federation during a difficult qualifying run**

The former midfielder had come under heavy criticism over his controversial ties with a Russian sports-betting company and what detractors viewed as a limited coaching resume.

## Divisive choice

Mancini's appointment, however, remains divisive despite leading Italy to the Euro 2020 title and a 37-match unbeaten streak.

His abrupt resignation as Italy coach in the summer of 2023 to take charge of Saudi Arabia reportedly damaged his standing with many senior FIGC officials, particularly as the Azzurri were struggling in their qualifying campaign for Euro 2024.

Mancini left his job with the Saudi side just 14 months later.

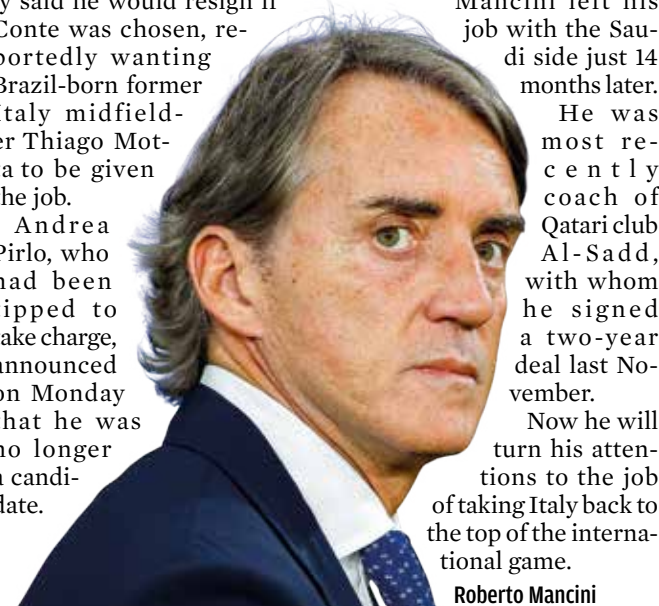
He was most recently coach of Qatari club Al-Sadd, with whom he signed a two-year deal last November.

Now he will turn his attention to the job of taking Italy back to the top of the international game.

Roberto Mancini



Zinedine Zidane



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