

# Bahrain must strive for 'even more great moments'

Veteran goalkeeper Sayed Mohammed Jaafar looks for inspiration in Bahrain's 2004 AFC Asian Cup success as he hopes to help lead the national team to qualifying for the 2023 edition of the continent's biggest football competition

● Bahrainis kick off final days of preparations for Group E qualifiers

● Nationals scheduled to take on Bangladesh in first match on Wednesday

TDI | Manama

Bahrain must strive to continue building the Kingdom's national team if they hope to relive some of their past successes in major international competitions.

This was stressed by veteran goalkeeper Sayed Mohammed Jaafar, who next week is hoping to help lead the nationals to their seventh appearance in the AFC Asian Cup, the continent's showpiece football tournament.

Jaafar made his Asian Cup debut for Bahrain in 2004 at the age of 18. That year, the Bahrainis



Bahrain's veteran goalkeeper Sayed Mohammed Jaafar during training yesterday in Kuala Lumpur

finished an unprecedented fourth place from the 16 participating nations, making it all the way to the semi-finals before losing to Japan in extra-time and eventually missing out on a medal finish.

Bahrain have yet to repeat that success, only making it past the group stage once since that year when they qualified for the

Round of 16 in the 2019 edition. Jaafar says that while the nationals have enjoyed other recent achievements, they must never settle and should always look to improve, and hopefully one day taste Asian Cup glory.

"That was a great moment to live," Jaafar said, looking back at the Bahrainis' 2004 Asian Cup success.



Bahrain's veteran goalkeeper Sayed Mohammed Jaafar during training yesterday in Kuala Lumpur

"But we are also living great moments already. That's why we have to keep improving ourselves to have even more great moments."

The Muharraq Club legend earlier this week became Bahrain's most-capped active player in the history of the national team, making his 150th ap-



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SAYED MOHAMMED JAAFAR

pearance for the Kingdom in a friendly win over Thailand.

"For me, I have long experience, so I want to pass some of my knowledge to others," Jaafar said.

"So many of our young players need these kinds of moments for motivation," he added. "This is what I am looking for as a player and as the captain of our team."

## Preparations

Jaafar is part of a 24-player Bahrain team that kicked off its final preparations in Kuala Lumpur yesterday for their upcoming

matches in AFC Asian Cup 2023 qualification.

The Bahrain squad at the Malaysian capital also features Jaafar's fellow-goalkeepers Sayed Shubbar Alawi and Ammar Mohammed; defenders Rashed Alhooti, Ahmed Abdulla, Waleed Al Hayyam, Ameen Denade, Ahmed Bughamar, Hamad Shamsan, Abbas Ayyad and Sayed Redha Isa; midfielders Ali Haram, Jassim Al Shaikh, Mahdi Abdullatif, Ammar Jaffar, Komail Alaswad, Abdulwahab Almalood, Ali Madan, Mohammed Jassim Marhoon, Ebrahim Al Khattal, Mahdi Humaidan and Saeed; and strikers Hashim Sayed Isa and Abdulla Yusuf.

The nationals are set to play in Group E of Asian Cup qualification alongside Turkmenistan, Bangladesh and Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur.

The games will be held over a single round on three match-days, first on June 8 against Bangladesh, then on June 11 against Malaysia, and finally on June 14 against Turkmenistan.

## Neymar doubles up from the spot as Brazil thump Korea

Reuters | Seoul

Neymar scored a pair of penalties to move to within four goals of Pele at the top of the country's all-time scoring list as Brazil cruised to a 5-1 win over fellow World Cup qualifiers South Korea at Seoul World Cup Stadium yesterday.

The Paris St Germain striker netted either side of halftime to move onto 73 goals in 118 appearances for his country and close in on the three-time World Cup winner's record in a comfortable win for Tite's side.

Richarlison gave Brazil the lead in the seventh minute and, although Hwang Ui-jo levelled for Korea just after the half-hour mark, it was the visitors who always looked more likely to prevail.

Neymar netted from the spot to put his side back in front three minutes before halftime and he was on hand with another penalty in the 57th minute before late goals from Philippe Coutinho and Gabriel Jesus put the seal on a comprehensive win.

Billed in some quarters as a battle between Neymar and South Korea's Tottenham Hotspur forward Son Heung-min, it was the Brazilian and his teammates who dominated in an often one-sided contest.

The South Americans took the lead early when Alex Sandro stormed into the penalty area and cut back to Fred, whose attempt was redirected past Kim Seung-gyu by Richar-



Brazil's Neymar in action with South Korea's Jung Woo-Young

# 73

goals have been scored by Neymar in 118 appearances for his country

lison from close range.

Brazil had already seen Thiago Silva's header ruled out for offside while Raphinha and Dani Alves also went close before the Koreans scored against the run of play in the 31st minute.

Receiving possession with his back to goal, Hwang used all his upperbody strength to

hold off Silva before turning to fire his right foot shot into the far corner.

The Brazilians, though, were back in front in the 42nd minute when referee Ryuji Sato awarded a penalty following a VAR review as Lee Yong upended Sandro and Neymar coolly slotted in.

He was even more composed when he rolled his second spot kick of the game home three minutes before the hour mark after Sandro was again brought down in the box, this time by Kim Young-gwon.

Coutinho added the fourth with 10 minutes remaining and Jesus scored a fifth three minutes into injury time when he sprinted through the Korea defence to score low into the corner.

## Team Abu Dhabi duo aim for flying start in bid for double world title triumph

TDI | Manama

Team Abu Dhabi's Thani Al Qemzi and Shaun Torrente once again have a double title triumph in their sights as they prepare to start the 2022 UIM F1H2O World Championship campaign in France today.

The pair have arrived in the ancient town of Macon Val de Saone in a confident mood as they pursue a fifth successive world team title, and look to reclaim the drivers' crown which agonizingly eluded them in a dramatic climax to the 2021 season.

Al Qemzi fell just one point short in his bid for a first individual driver's title while a blown engine in qualifying ended Torrente's hopes of a third success in a row as Swede Jonas Andersson emerged victorious.

All that is now history, and the Team Abu Dhabi duo are determined to make a flying start to the new season in the Grand Prix of France, with the boats taking to the Saone River circuit for an initial free practice session tomorrow afternoon ahead of Sunday's big race.

After several days of testing in San Nazzaro, Italy last week under the guidance of team manager and ten-time F1H2O champion, Guido Cappellini, Al Qemzi and Torrente are primed for action in the flagship series of international single-seater



Thani Al Qemzi in action



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THANI AL QEMZI

inshore circuit powerboat racing.

"We trained well and prepared ourselves well in Italy," said Al Qemzi. "We have good boats, and everything that

happened last year is forgotten. This is a new season, and I believe I can do something this time. I want to bring back the driver's title to Abu Dhabi."

With the International Powerboat Federation (UIM) celebrating its 100th anniversary this year, Abu Dhabi Marine Sports Club would like to mark the occasion with a double success.

It is now 22 years since Al Qemzi first launched his quest for a world title, and no driver has worked harder or gone closer without claiming the ultimate prize.

Partnering Torrente as he emerged as champion in 2019 and 2020 has only served to underline his self-belief, and the Emirati draws strength from the bond he has forged with the American in Team Abu Dhabi colours.