

Pizzi calls up full-strength Bahrain

Kingdom's senior men's national football team features 26-player line-up named for Asian qualifiers of 2026 FIFA World Cup

● **Juan Antonio Pizzi selects four overseas-based professionals, and from Al Khaldiya, Riffa, Muharraq, Manama, Al Ahli and Al Najma**

● **Bahrainis to play two Asian qualifiers this month for 2026 FIFA World Cup: 16 November against Yemen, 21 November against UAE**



Bahrain's Abdulla Yusuf in action against the Philippines in an international friendly held last month

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Bahrain head coach Juan Antonio Pizzi has named a full-strength, 26-player senior men's national football team for their two matches this month in continental qualification for the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

The Bahrainis are set to play against Yemen on 16 November at Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz Sports City in Abha, Saudi Arabia, and then go up against the UAE at the National Stadium in Riffa on 21 November.

Pizzi has capped up Bahrain's biggest names for the qualifiers.

Among them are the Kingdom's four overseas-based professionals in Ali Madan from Ajman Club in the UAE, Mohammed Marhoon from Kuwait SC in Kuwait, Abdulla Yusuf from FK Mlada Boleslav in the Czech Republic and Moses Atede from Kedah Darul Aman FC in Malaysia.

Meanwhile, his local selections are from defending Nasser bin Hamad Bahrain Premier League champions Al Khaldiya, Riffa, Muharraq, Manama, Al Ahli and Al Najma.

Mahdi Humaidan, Ahmed

Bughammar, Mohammed Adel and Mohammed Al Hardan have been chosen from Khaldiya. From Riffa are Abdulkarim Al Fardan, Ali Hassan, Sayed Mahdi Baqer, Hussain Al Aker, Komail Al Aswad, Jassim Al Shaikh, Mohammed Abdulqayoom, and Hazza Ali.

From Muharraq are Sayed Mohammed Jaafar, Amine Hasan, Waleed Al Hayyam, Abdulla Al Khalasi and Mubarak Mohammed; while from Al Ahli are Ebrahim Luthfallah and Abdulla Al Hashash. Ebrahim Al Khattal was se-



There are five rounds in the FIFA World Cup qualification format for the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), which will have eight teams book their tickets to the global showcase, plus potentially another following an inter-confederation play-off. Bahrain are directly in the second round of qualifiers

lected from Manama, while completing the roster from Najma are Mohammed Abdulwahab and Ebrahim Al Wali.

Kick off

The nationals are scheduled to kick off their training programme on Sunday.

Aside from FIFA World Cup qualification, Bahrain are also



Juan Antonio Pizzi supervises a training session

gearing up for the next edition of the AFC Asian Cup, to be held in Doha in January of next year. These are the national team's first official games under Pizzi.

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Bahrain are directly in the second round of qualifiers in Group H with the UAE, Yemen and Nepal.

After these two upcoming

matches, the qualifiers only resume next year. They take on Nepal on 21 March, and then face off with the Nepalese again on 26 March. They then face Yemen on 6 June, before completing this stage against the UAE on 11 June.

There are 36 nations in all in this phase, divided into nine groups of four. The teams will play against each other on a home-and-away basis. The nine group winners and group runners-up advance to the third round. In addition to this, they will also automatically qualify for the 2027 AFC Asian Cup.

Bahrain's Faris, Shadi advance in ITF boys' doubles play

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The Bahraini tandem of Faris Al Toobli and Shadi Kallel advanced to the boys' doubles quarter-finals yesterday in the Bahrain ITF Juniors 2023 tournament, which is currently being played at the Bahrain Tennis Federation (BTF) hard courts in Isa Town.

The competition is a J30 event that is part of the 2023 International Tennis Federation (ITF) World Tennis Tour Juniors, which features the world's top tennis talents aged 13 to 18.

Faris and Shadi booked their place after beating Germany's Elias Kaan Held and Egypt's Ahmed Ibrahim 6-3, 7-5 in their first-round match.

They next face off with the second-seeded Indian pair of Samprit Sharma and Rushikesh

Sonawane, who were 6-2, 6-3 winners against Georgii Arakelian and Daniil Karpukhin in another encounter in the opening stage.

Other contests in the last eight pit top seeds Venkat Rishi Batlanki of the US and Dev Kanbargimath of Romania against Sacha Fontanges of France and Idhant Kastwar of India; Spaniards Andres Pereiro Lopez and Victor Velasco Caballer with Turks Ozan Avanglu and Mustafa Ege Topbas; and the Indian-Yemeni tandem of Kaushik Arunkumar and Ahmed Mohammed against third-seeded Turkish pair Bora Bakici and Cagan Efe Tufekci.

Elsewhere in the tournament yesterday, Shadi went down fighting to Turkish sixth seed Bora 1-6, 4-6 in the boys' singles first round. Others to win



Bahrain's Hajar Zaidan in action during her singles match last night

In the girls' singles, seventh seed Alina Sogomonyan defeated Bahrain's Hajar Zaidan 6-0, 6-3; while in the girls' doubles, Hajar and partner Saiyette Varadkar of India lost to Arina Malygina and Anastasia Myachina 2-6, 6-7 (3).

Other winning tandems in the girls' doubles yesterday were Egyptian third seeds Sara Dessouky and Sosanne Malak, fourth seeds Ariana Gogulina and Adiya Omarbek of Kazakhstan; and Romania's Simona Cucu and Austria's Emily Lederer.

Tournament action continues today at the BTF. It is the second of three straight ITF events being hosted by the Kingdom in succession. The second is also a J30 event, while the third, a J60 competition, will begin on 13 November.

Riffa claim AFC Cup win over Kuwait's Arabi



Riffa's Komail Al Aswad dribbles past his Al Arabi defenders

● **Riffa claim third victory in four games to improve to 10 points**

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Bahrain's Riffa Club were 2-1 winners over Al Arabi SC of Kuwait in their Group C match of the 2023 AFC Cup, held at Khalifa Sports City Stadium in Riffa.

Vinicius Vargas and Hashem Sayed Issa were both on target for the victors.

Vargas opened the Bahrainis' scoring in the 25th minute with a lobbed effort over an onrushing Arabi goalkeeper Sulaiman Abdulghafoor. That was enough to give them the single-goal lead at the break.

Just seven minutes after the re-start, Issa doubled Riffa's advantage with a shot from close range off an assist from Hazza Ali.

Riffa were well on their way to the full three points but

not without giving up a lone consolation to the Kuwaitis. Mamadou Thiam scored three minutes from full time for Arabi.

With the result, Riffa claimed their third win in four matches and improved to 10 points on the Group C table with two games remaining.

Riffa's next AFC Cup clash will be against Nejmeh SC of Lebanon on 27 November. They complete their group campaign on 12 December away at Al Zawra'a of Iraq.

The AFC Cup is the annual continental club competition of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) for continent's top club teams not competing in the AFC Champions League. Riffa are the lone Bahraini outfit in this year's competition.

Standings

	P	W	D	L	+/-	Pts
Riffa (Bahrain)	4	3	1	0	6	10
Al Zawraa (Iraq)	4	2	1	1	3	7
Al Arabi SC (Kuwait)	4	1	1	2	-3	4
Nejmeh SC (Lebanon)	4	0	1	3	-6	1



Bahrain Bodybuilding Federation president Sami Al Haddad and Bahrain Olympic Committee (BOC) sports federations director Hisham Al Balooshi received the Kingdom's national bodybuilding team upon their return from the IFBB World Bodybuilding Championships, held in Santa Susanna, Spain. There, they won four medals, including one gold, two silver and one bronze. The gold was claimed by Abdulla Farouk in the men's bodybuilding up-to-85kg class. A silver was won by Abdulla Isa Ahmed Ali in the master men's physique 45-49 years open, while the second silver was claimed by Khaled Alsaedi in the men's physique up-to-176cm. Bahrain's bronze was claimed by Muslem Albanna in the men's bodybuilding up-to-90kg category. Bahrain finished an impressive 11th overall amongst 49 competing nations on the final teams' ranking, and were tied-24th from 50 countries in the men's masters final teams' classification. Above, the bodybuilders with officials upon their arrival