

Bahrain eye World Cup under Pizzi

Argentinian Juan Antonio Pizzi officially unveiled as new head coach of Bahrain's senior men's national football team

● **Juan Antonio Pizzi signs two-year contract with Bahrain Football Association**

● **Bahrainis eye start of 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifiers and next AFC Asian Cup**

TDI | Manama



Shaikh Ali bin Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa speaks to the Press



Shaikh Ali bin Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa presents Juan Antonio Pizzi a commemorative jersey during yesterday's unveiling alongside officials



Juan Antonio Pizzi during the event

Bahrain is hopeful that new senior men's national football team head coach Juan Antonio Pizzi can help the Kingdom realise its dream of one day playing in the FIFA World Cup—global football's showpiece event.

This was declared yesterday by Bahrain Football Association (BFA) president Shaikh Ali bin Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa at the official unveiling and contract signing of Pizzi, held at the BFA headquarters in Riffa.

"Coach Pizzi has won the Copa America, he coached Saudi Arabia in the World Cup in Russia; he has good experience, which this team needs for us to go to the next level," Shaikh Ali told TDI.

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SHAIKH ALI BIN KHALIFA BIN AHMED AL KHALIFA

Shaikh Ali singled out qualifying for the 2026 World Cup as Bahrain's main target under the renowned Argentinian tactician. The national team will be vying for one of the expanded eight direct slots from Asia in the tournament, or look to make it through the inter-confederation

play-offs.

Bahrain advanced to that last hurdle of the World Cup qualifiers twice in the past—first facing Trinidad and Tobago for a berth in the 2006 World Cup and then against New Zealand for a place in the 2010 competition—but narrowly lost by a single goal both times.

Shaikh Ali is encouraged that Bahrain can make history for the 2026 event with Pizzi at the helm.

"We've been through to the end of the qualifiers twice; we succeeded until the last mile against Trinidad and Tobago

and then New Zealand," Shaikh Ali recalled.

Opportunity

"We failed in the previous World Cup qualifiers, so overall I think this opportunity is high. There are eight teams that will qualify, plus one, so it's an opportunity for us. We must support him and help Bahrain reach the World Cup as an objective, which every Bahraini wants."

Also in attendance at yesterday's unveiling were BFA vice-president His Highness Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali bin Isa Al Khalifa, BFA secretary gen-

eral Rashid Al Zoubi, and other officials.

Shaikh Ali said that Pizzi was one of their top choices to take over the national team in place of departed Portuguese head coach Helio Sousa.

"We had a long list of coaches, we started negotiating with them one by one, and Coach Pizzi was one of our high choices," Shaikh Ali explained.

"He is a well-known coach. For the Kingdom of Bahrain, for our upcoming programme with the World Cup qualifiers and the Asian Cup coming ahead, it's important to have someone with

his background."

According to Shaikh Ali, Pizzi has signed a two-year contract with Bahrain.

One of his first duties will be to approve the senior men's national team's training plan in preparation for the AFC Asian Cup, which will be held in Doha in January of next year. Bahrain are one of 24 teams who have qualified for the continent's premier tournament.

Prior to the Asian Cup, the Bahrainis will begin their World Cup qualifying campaign this November. They will play directly in the second round of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) qualifiers. The draw for the groupings will be held on Thursday.

There are five rounds in the qualification format for Asia.

2 Seas impress in British GT3 qualifying

● **James Cottingham, Jonny Adam qualify in second in 2 Seas' #4 Mercedes-AMG GT3**

● **Ian Loggie, Phil Keen in team's #1 contender book third on start grid for 2.25pm race**

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Bahraini-British motor racing team 2 Seas Motorsport enjoyed an impressive qualifying yesterday for round seven of the 2023 Intelligent Money British GT Championship, being held at Autodromo do Algarve in Portugal.

Both of 2 Seas' cars secured places in the top three on the start grid, with James Cottingham and Jonny Adam in their #4 Mercedes-AMG GT3 challenger on the front row along-



2 Seas' #1 Mercedes-AMG GT3 in action during yesterday's qualifying

side pole-sitters Miguel Ramos and Marvin Kirchhoefer of Garage 59.

2 Seas' Ian Loggie and Phil Keen in their #1 contender took third on the grid.

Cottingham and Adam posted a best time of three minutes 24.637 seconds on the GT3 combined qualifying timesheet—just

0.166 seconds off the leading pace. Loggie and Keen were 0.436s back amongst the 17-car field.

Today's race is scheduled for a 2.25pm start, Bahrain time, around the 4.653-kilometre track.

Heading into this weekend's round, 2 Seas have a healthy

lead in the GT3 Teams Championship. They are on 191.5 points, while their closest challengers from Century Motorsport are on 96.5 points.

Cottingham and Adam are also leaders in the GT3 Drivers Championship with 102 points apiece, with Loggie and 2 Seas' other driver Jules Gounon currently third on 89.5 points each.

Furthermore, Cottingham and Adam are in first place on the GT3 Pro-Am standings with 110.5 points apiece, while Loggie and Gounon are tied-second on 96.5 points each with Darren Leung and Dan Harper of Century Motorsport.

The 2023 British GT campaign features nine rounds in all. This weekend's action marks the season's only round outside of the UK.

The championship will then race at Brands Hatch on September 9 and 10, and then at Donington Park for the season-finale on October 21 and 22.

Bilbao in top 10 on Tour de France penultimate stage



Pello Bilbao rides behind teammate Mikel Landa amongst other competitors in yesterday's stage

● **Spaniard Pello Bilbao hoping to secure sixth place overall on general classification at end of today's race**

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Team Bahrain Victorious rider Pello Bilbao finished in the top 10 yesterday on the penultimate stage of the 2023 Tour de France.

The Spaniard was classified eighth overall in the 133.5-kilometre leg, 33 seconds behind winner Tadej Pogacar of the UAE Team Emirates.

Bahrain Victorious teammate Wout Poels was 13th yesterday while Mikel Landa came 33rd. Jack Haig finished 45th, Fred Wright 74th, Nikias Arndt 129th and Matej Mo-

horic 133rd, just a day after claiming a famous victory on stage 19.

With yesterday's result, Bilbao went sixth on the general classification with just today's final leg to go. Both he and Mohoric are also in the top 10 in the points ranking, with Mohoric eighth on 106 points and Bilbao ninth on 103.

Bahrain Victorious stayed fourth overall on the teams ranking, nearly 30 minutes behind leaders Jumbo Vista.

Today's final stage will be over 115.5km, starting from Saint-Quentin-En-Yvelines and ending at the Champs-Élysées in Paris.

This year's Tour de France features a total of 3,404km. The race is the second of three Grand Tour events on this year's Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) World Tour.

Guardiola has 'incredible doubts' despite treble success

AFP | London

Pep Guardiola laughed off claims that he was the greatest coach of all time yesterday, saying he lives with "incredible doubts" despite leading Manchester City to the treble last season.

Under the Spaniard, City became only the second English team after rivals Manchester United to win the Champions



Pep Guardiola

League, Premier League and FA Cup in the same season.

But Guardiola said he was "not a god" when asked if he

was the greatest of all time after arriving in Japan for City's pre-season tour.

"I live with incredible doubts in my head," said Guardiola.

"If I had success in my career, I've said many times I was in Barcelona with the players that you know perfectly, I was in Bayern Munich, and we are here."

"We are building and doing something incredible I would

not expect when we arrived," he added.

City have won seven Premier League titles since 2012 -- including five in the last six seasons under Guardiola.

They won their first Champions League title when they beat Inter Milan 1-0 in Istanbul last month.

Guardiola warned that "with football you cannot be sure of anything".