

## THE DISMAL PERFORMANCES OF AFRICAN TEAMS AT 2010 FIFA WORLD CUP COMPETITION IN SOUTH AFRICA

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### ABSTRACT

*Africa has been adequately represented in the last six editions of the FIFA World Cup Competition. With the gradual increase in the number of participating countries, at least five nations have been favoured to participate. The 2010 FIFA World Cup was exceptional due to the hosting right conferred on the continent, hence six countries featured. The granting of hosting right to an African nation presupposes that the continent would be able to show the world that it was ready to give competitors from other continents keen challenges. But alas, save for Ghana that fought to the quarter-final stage, other five countries recorded dismal performances. This development prompted this study to take an analytical approach into the causes of the unimpressive performance of African teams. Findings revealed that problems confronting the players include indiscipline, lack of team work, lack of commitment, poor officiating etc. While it was concluded that CAF must view the problems of African sports with keen interest and high sense of commitment, it was recommended among other things that players must be motivated for better performance and promotion of commitment and dedication to national duties.*

**Keywords:** *Dismal performance, African teams, 2010 world cup, South Africa.*

### INTRODUCTION

The much publicized 2010 World Cup mundial had come and gone but the memories of the one-month event would linger for a long time. South Africa's successful hosting of the first ever FIFA World Cup competition in the black continent is momentous as African nations strive for pride of place in world football. With creative enthusiasm, energy, spirit and determination, South African had proved to the world that they would do it and it came to pass, as the country went on to stage one of the most memorable World Cups in history. South Africa 2010 would also be remembered as one of the most unpredictable World Cup finals ever staged, churning out one stunning result after another, in competitions one could describe as fierce with close contests among the world's best 64 footballing countries.

After exactly 30 days of competition which featured 64 matches from the round-robin, Group stage, the round of 16 matches, the quarter-finals, the third place match and the epic final that produced a brand new World Cup winner, the greatest sporting spectacle on Earth came to an end with one of the

most emotional and equally glamorous closing ceremonies in recent memory, (Guardian editorial, July 12, 2010). Despite the success stories of the 19th edition of the mundial, especially in the areas of provision of befitting infrastructure, security and hospitality, it was not without its flops and shortcomings. The event was bedeviled with the worst refereeing decisions and indiscipline on the part of players which are capable of eroding the game's credibility. There were evidences of unpredictable instances during the competitions. Virtually all the fancied teams were backing home to watch the final on television.

Brazil was sent packing in the quarter-final, France displaying acts of indiscipline did not advance past the Group stage, Australia left for home in the Group stage, England in the round of 16, Argentina with a 4-0 bashing from Germany in the round of 16, Argentina with a 4-0 was forcefully eliminated in the quarter final. On the African side, five out of six teams from the continent were hurriedly despatched home in the Group stage. These African countries were: the host country, South Africa one-time quarter-finalist in one of the editions of the World Cup, Cameroon, Algeria, Nigeria and Cote d'Ivoire. However, Black Stars of Ghana gallantly reached the quarter-final. With this feat, President Jacob Zuma of South Africa renamed the team "Black Stars of Africa" while former President Nelson Mandela called them "genuine heroes". Deserving, you would say!

### PERFORMANCES OF AFRICAN TEAMS

Six countries represented Africa at the Mundial. While five got qualified on competitive grounds, one, the host country rode on the back of hosting right. An analysis of performance showed that five national teams - South Africa, Nigeria, Cameroon, Algeria and Cote d'Ivoire did not go beyond the preliminary stage. Only Ghana played in the second round and the quarter-final stages. The table below shows how each of these African teams fared at the group level.

**Table 1:** Group A

Country	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
Uruguay	3	2	1	0	4	0	4	7
Mexico	3	1	1	1	3	2	1	4
South Africa	3	1	1	1	3	5	-2	4
France	3	0	1	2	1	4	-3	1

**Source:** Complete Football Magazine, July, 2010 Edition

Table 1 above shows that South Africa recorded third position with four points having won a single match against France (2-1), drew one all in her encounter with Mexico in the mundial's opener and lost to Uruguay in a 0-3 duel. She recorded three goals in favour and five goals against leaving her with a goal deficit of minus two. With this outcome, she failed to move to the second round of the competition. In the opening match, a South African player, Siphiwe Tshabalala scored the first ever World Cup goal on African soil.

The Bafana Bafana thus became the first ever host nation to be knocked out of the World Cup at the group stage.

**Table 2: Group B**

Country	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
Argentina	3	3	0	0	7	1	6	9
South Korea	3	1	1	1	5	6	-1	4
Greece	3	1	0	2	2	5	-3	3
Nigeria	3	0	1	2	3	5	-2	1

**Source:** Complete Football Magazine, July, 2010 Edition

Table 2 indicates that the only African team in the group, Nigeria found herself at the bottom of the table having recorded only one point, goal difference of minus two, three goals in the favour and five goals against. Having played three matches, she lost two, drew one winning nothing. With this unimpressive outings, the team - Super Eagles failed to advance to the next stage. Following this ouster, the nation's coach, Lars Lagerback reacted this way: "Mostly, I feel disappointed and sad. It's the results that count so there is not much to say. I'm very disappointed. I think we deserved much better but that's how it is in football sometimes. The players gave their all in all three matches."

**Table 3: Group C**

Country	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
USA	3	1	2	0	4	3	1	5
England	3	1	2	0	2	1	1	5
Slovenia	3	1	1	1	3	3	0	4
Algeria	3	0	1	2	0	2	-2	1

**Source:** Complete Football Magazine, July, 2010 Edition

In Table 3 above, Algeria performed woefully winning no match, drawing one and losing two. The country did not score a single goal but conceded two goals while the minus two goal difference gave her only one point. One of her players, Abdelkader Ghezzal who was substituted in place of Djebbour in the 67 minutes picked up two yellow cards in just 14 minutes and 19 seconds against Slovenia, making him the fastest substitute to pick up two yellow cards in a match, in World Cup history. In their match against USA which they lost by a lone goal, the Algeria coach, Rabah Saadane reacted: "I think it was a very good match from us. We played well, in fact, both teams did. We were unlucky. The altitude played a role in the physical side of things and some players struggled in the second half".

**Table 4: Group D**

Country	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
Germany	3	2	0	1	5	1	4	6
Ghana	3	1	1	1	2	2	0	4
Australia	3	1	1	1	3	6	-3	4
Serbia	3	1	0	2	2	3	-1	3

**Source:** Complete Football Magazine, July, 2010 Edition

Indication from Table 4 above reveal's Ghana performed well among the six African teams that featured in South Africa. The Black Stars played three matches at the group stage, won one match against Serbia, drew one all

with Australia and lost 0-1 to Germany. In all, it had two goals in favour and two goals against thus bagging four points to emerge second on the table. The outcome of this result saw it moving to the second round of the competition. Ghana scaled the second round hurdle beating USA two goals to one to become the third African country to reach the quarter-final stage in a World Cup outing after Cameroon (1990) and Senegal (2002). The Black Stars' desire to advance to the semi-final was dashed by Uruguay on penalty shoot-out following the inability of both sides to put the game to rest at regulation time and extra time thereafter. The score-line was one goal apiece while the penalty shoot-out produced two goals to Ghana and four to Uruguay.

**Table 5:** Group E

Country	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
Netherlands	3	3	0	0	4	1	3	9
Japan	3	2	0	1	4	2	2	6
Denmark	3	1	0	2	3	6	-3	3
Cameroun	3	0	0	3	2	5	-3	0

**Source:** Complete Football Magazine, July, 2010 Edition

In the fifth table, the African side in the group, Cameroun turned out to be the whipping team. The Indomitable Lions recorded no point following three loses, no win, no draw, scored two goals and conceded five goals to record their worst World Cup outing in six appearances. Surprisingly, the team became the first side to be knocked out of the competition among the 32 competing teams. Their previous worst outing was in 1994 when the Lions drew once and lost two matches, including the 6-1 drubbing by Russia. In his post match address, the coach, Paul Le Guen said: “our record of three defeats is a crushing blow. I've not succeeded in turning the team into a unit, so my personal record is the same as the team's. I tried my best, and I thought we'd do better than that”.

**Table 6:** Group G

Country	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
Brazil	3	2	1	0	5	2	3	7
Portugal	3	1	2	0	7	0	7	5
Cote d' Ivoire	3	1	1	1	4	3	1	4
North Korea	3	0	0	3	1	12	-11	0

**Source:** Complete Football Magazine, July, 2010 Edition

In Table 6 above, Cote d'Ivoire was third on the table with four points playing three games winning one match, drawing one and losing one. The elephant scored four goals and conceded three. The overall scoreline jolted the Ivoriens especially their failure to defeat the Portuguese. The coach, Sven Gora Eriksson did not hide his feelings at the post-match briefing: "We created a lot of chances and I can't be negative about this match. We have regrets about the last 15 minutes of the match against Portugal. We should have taken more risks to score. “The captain of the team, Didier Drogba spoke in the same vein: We did everything we could to get out of the group. I have a few regrets, particularly about our game against Portugal; we could have scored”. Their match against Portugal ended goalless.

## THE CHALLENGES

The challenges before African countries in the face of this dismal outings are legion. They range from indiscipline, lack of team work, lack of dedication and commitment to national call, to deficiency in quality preparation.

**Indiscipline:** Generally, many players are not disciplined. They believe they are above rules and regulations. Acts of indiscipline manifest in the form of lateness to camp without genuine reason, disobedience to camp rules, and disrespect to coaches and officials etc. Foreign-based players, often times, see themselves as superior to their home-based handlers because of the higher remunerations they earn. The unprecedented number of yellow and red cards handed to players at 2010 World Cup attests to acts of indiscipline.

**Team-work:** It is a fact that team work is the magic wand to a successful outing in football. Team work encourages good passes, co-ordination, concentration and good display of soccer artistry. Due to the fire brigade approach and poor preparation, players result to exhibition of individual skills, having failed to blend. This is a phenomenon habitual among Nigerian players whose stay-together was ephemeral.

**Commitment:** More often, players place their dedication and commitment to their various clubs above their nations'. This was evident at the 2010 World Cup finals. Some stars, earlier predicted to perform excellently at the mundial flopped. Soccer stars like Lionel Messi, Wayne Rooney, Frank Ribery, Robin Van Persie, Fernando Torres, Fabio Cannavaro, our own Samuel Eto'o and Didier Drogba were not as vibrant as when playing for their clubs.

## FALLING OF THE MIGHTY

A chronicle of performances of big teams in the South African finals showed how football superpowers crumbled like pack of cards. Who would have predicted that only one South American would make it to the semi-final stage, when teams from the region had earlier threatened to make it a South American World Cup? Their performance at the early elimination stage revealed that in the cumulative first twelve matches they had played, they had won ten, drawn the other two. Brazil, a five times champions, were not the only world football super power sent packing in the quarter-final. France, the 1998 champions, and finalist in 2006 did not advance beyond the Group stage, winning only one point. A couple of hours after Brazil was eliminated, two times winner, Argentina was shown the way out by the Germans who went on a scoring spree, by putting four unreplied goals past Argentina's goalkeeper, Sergio Romero.

Ositelu (2010) states that both Australia and England suffered the same fate from Germany with a 4-0 and 4-1 defeat respectively adding that no one could have predicted that any team would pump four unanswered goals against mighty Argentina which paraded an array of superstars including megastar Lionel Messi. Another unpredictability of the last World Cup was on the

managerial perspective; according to Ositelu (2010), Argentina's Diego Armando Maradona and Brazil's Dunga failed in their dreams to achieve rare honour of becoming coaches to win the World Cup making it double, having won same as players in 1986 (Maradona) as captain and USA '94 (Dunga) as Brazil's captain. Before now, Brazil's Mario Zagallo, Carlos Alberto Perreira and Germany's Franz Beckenbaus have won the World Cup as players and later as coaches, thus making it double.

Still on the falling of the mighty, players were no exceptions, superstars' like the English Premiership's Didier Drogba of Cote d'Ivoire, England's Wayne Rooney, Brazil and Real Madrid's Kaka, Portugal and Real Madrid's Ronaldo Samuel Eto'o and even the reigning FIFA player of the year, Lionel Messi, emerged as super flops instead of superstars in South Africa.

### **BENEFITS OF THE MUNDIAL**

In his report on Danny Jordaan, the Chief Executive officer of showpiece in South Africa, Okpara (2010) highlighted the gains which accrued from staging the World Cup. He said Jordaan expressed his pleasure with the conduct of his compatriots and the unity displayed by all Africans in ensuring that the World Cup changed peoples' perception of the continent. Okpara said: The power of the World Cup to unite a people often seen as being backward was encapsulated by the devout support every African bestowed on Ghana. It was also evident in the rush with which soccer fans embraced the novel notion of "Africa United" and this followed all the teams from the continent to the stadiums where African teams played.

Another benefit envisaged is the premise of the World Cup leaving so many jobs behind when the visitors must have left for their countries. Apart from the dream of better jobs, Okpara reported that Jordaan believes the World Cup has opened skeptic eyes to the innate ability of Africans to rise up to the occasion when challenged. The negative report from some foreign media predicting that visitors to South Africa would be faced with dangerous crimes, malfunctioning facilities and dangerous wild animals, eventually came to emptiness as the country showcased one of the best road networks in the world, uninterrupted power supply (electricity) and reduction in crime perpetration.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

For the first time in the history of the 80-year-old World Cup finals, the 2010 edition was hosted on the African soil. It was the very first time, Africa was given six representations. With this rare opportunity granted by FIFA, one would have expected that African teams would perform excellently well at least one of them advancing to the semi-final stage. But this was not to be. This development ought to be a worrisome issue for the Confederation of African Football, CAF, the supervisory body for all football Federations in

Africa. The dismal performance of African teams should be addressed by CAF as we prepare for the preliminaries towards qualification of 2014 edition scheduled for Brazil. Youth soccer competition must be encouraged more while products of such cadre be transited to the senior level. The parade of youthful stars by Germany and Ghana saw the two countries performed credibly in South Africa. The following recommendations will suffice:

- CAF should ensure that discipline is enforced among all federations under its command. Erring players and officials including referees should face stiff penalties.
- There must be increase in the competitions among countries in the continent to ensure fitness and enhancement of team work.
- Players must be motivated for better performance and promotion of commitment and dedication to national duties.

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