

AUTHOR'S NOTE

By the time you read this, the 17th African Cup of Nations has already forged a place in the great annals of football history.

Angola, a rapidly emerging economy in Africa, was awarded the status of host nation after impressively beating off competition from nine of their neighbouring countries.

The Confederation Africaine de Football (CAF) gave the oil and diamond nation four years to prepare and showcase an exhibition for the world. The commitment of the organisers, coupled with the knowhow of the Chinese contractors ensured that numerous state of the art stadia were built in time for the finals. Along with new and notable sporting facilities, the event presented an opportunity for regeneration. To coincide with the finals, the government and organisers also planned and sanctioned a major overhaul of the country's tourism and transport infrastructure.

República de Angola as hosts fell in nicely with the CAF's policy of supporting their members increase activity within the economy, attract investment and develop modern football and sports facilities through the hosting of a major footballing spectacle.

The highlights were many, but the lowlight of the tournament is an obvious one; the shocking machine gun attack on Adebayor and the Togolese team bus, resulting in the tragic death of three members of the team at the hands of armed gunmen in Cabinda. The dead included the bus driver, assistant coach Amalete Abalo and press officer Stanislaud Ocloo, whilst reserve goalkeeper Kodjovi Obilale was left breathing with the aid of a respirator. Bizarrely, Togo have been banned from two African Nations Cups because of their subsequent withdrawal to mourn and grieve for the dead.

They say Egypt is where it all began, and once again we have been party to this historic nation securing a Seventh triumph, including a hat trick of consecutive wins of the Twenty Seventh version of this prestigious biennial tournament.

Spurred on after the dreaded disappointment of being beaten to a world cup spot by the plucky Algerians, Egypt overcame their fellow competitors with great ease, playing with style and a fresh free spirit.

Hassan Shehata's Pharaohs were always superior, always in control, always that little bit better, combining a mix of Brazilian fluency with German teutonic efficiency. All this achieved despite the absence of Abou Trika, Mido and Zaki point towards great in-depth strength.

This is just the beginning, and unless the young guns of Ghana continue their progress, it is hard to see who will come close to knocking the children of the Nile off their golden thrones. With Egypt's arrival as a major force in football, now comes international acclaim and recognition. Grandad Gedo's mesmerising goalscoring exploits as a sub have paved the way for a meeting with Europe's top scouts, whilst Zidan unsurprisingly is being courted by Premiership giants Manchester United and Arsenal.

Memories of note are also the comical goalkeeping errors, (barring Richard Kingson) and the poor form and absence of the Galacticos, namely, Drogba, Essien, Eto'o. Other highlights are the Malian 12 minute comeback to level a four goal deficit.

We will soon see more of Algeria, Cameroon, Ivory Coast and Nigeria as they enter the World Cup 2010 in the summer.

The trophy once again returns to the land of the pyramids, but with the absence of Egypt, the World cup will be much poorer.

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