

**26** Zaha sends Ivory Coast into last 8; Mali fluff their lines

**26** PSG get tough with Neymar after pre-season no-show

**27** Federer eyes 100th Wimbledon victory and Nadal showdown



## Tunisia end 54-year Ghana dominance

Ghana's Cup of Nations woes continue; Tunisia win on penalties



ISMALIA: Ghana's players react to their defeat during the 2019 Africa Cup of Nations (CAN) Round of 16 football match between Ghana and Tunisia at the Ismailia Stadium on July 8, 2019.

ISMALIA: Tunisia defeated Ghana 5-4 on penalties Monday with Ferjani Sassi converting the decisive spot-kick to end a 54-year Africa Cup of Nations losing streak against the Black Stars. After a 1-1 draw following extra time in Ismailia, Tunisia scored from all five penalties while Ghana substitute Caleb Ekusan had his attempt saved by Farouk Ben Mustapha, who came off the bench especially for the shootout.

Victory was sweet for Tunisia as they had lost six times to Ghana in the African football showcase from 1965 after drawing the first meeting between the nations two years earlier. On Thursday, the Carthage Eagles play giantkillers Madagascar in a quarter-final in Cairo with the winners meeting Senegal or Benin for a place in the July 19 final. Losing on penalties ended a Ghana run of six consecutive top-four finishes in the Cup of Nations and puts the future of coach Kwesi Appiah in doubt.

Four-time former champions Ghana changed two of the team that began a 2-0 win over Guinea-Bissau that enabled them to pip Cameroon for top spot in Group F

on goals scored. Both alterations were on the left side of a 4-3-3 formation with defender Nuhu Kasim and midfielder Afriyie Acquah replacing Joseph Aidoo and Owusu Kwabena. Tunisia coach and 1980s France star Alain Giresse reacted to an embarrassing 0-0 draw with minnows Mauritania in their previous match by dropping four of the team.

### Big surprise

A big surprise was the exclusion of forward Wahbi Khazri, who had been the outstanding Tunisian attacker in the group phase and scored one of their two goals. Bassem Srarfi, Naim Sliiti and Karim Aouadhi were also relegated to the bench with Ghaylen Chaalali, Ferjani Sassi, Taha Yassine Khenissi and Anice Badri promoted. After early yellow cards for Ghanaian John Boye, the first player to be red-carded in the group phase, and Tunisian Dylan Bronn, the first half became a cagey, even affair. Ghana came close to scoring on 16 minutes when a Kasim header struck the post and Andre Ayew fired the rebound straight at goal-

keeper Hassen Mouez.

Andre Ayew was convinced he had put the Black Stars ahead on 41 minutes when he backheeled a cross into the net, but the referee ruled that Thomas Partey handled in the build-up. Replays showed the ball touching the chin of the Atletico Madrid midfielder rather than a hand and the disallowed goal infuriated the Ghanaians. Midway through the second half Giresse had second thoughts about the composition of his attack, which was making little impression, and sent on Khazri in place of Badri.

Khazri needed just five minutes to make an impact with his brilliant backheel creating space for Wajdi Kechrida to cross and Khenissi scored with a shot that went in off the near post. The woodwork foiled Ghana a second time when a Mubarak Wakaso shot from outside the box struck the far post 10 minutes from the end of regular time with Mouez beaten. In the first minute of stoppage time, the Blacks Stars drew level with an attempted headed clearance by Bedoui looped over Mouez, who had strayed off his line. — AFP



ISMALIA: Tunisia's midfielder Ferjani Sassi (right) kneels to celebrate their victory during the 2019 Africa Cup of Nations (CAN) Round of 16 football match between Ghana and Tunisia on July 8, 2019. — AFP photos

## Egyptian soccer fans fed up with sacrificing much

CAIRO: Like many Egyptian football fans, Mahmoud Hashem sees "no reason to be excited" by the Africa Cup of Nations which continues in the country until July 19 without the host nation's involvement. "As a fan, I am deprived of everything that made me love football", he despondently told AFP after the lacklustre hosts were knocked out Saturday by South Africa in the round of 16. Sitting at a downtown Cairo, Hashem, 30, a fervent supporter of Egyptian powerhouse Al-Ahly, said he was having difficulty getting disappointed by the national squad's latest embarrassing loss on home turf.

"There's been a lot of problems in Egyptian football that have led me and many people I know to be less interested in the game," he added. The North African country's football scene has been chaotic in the last few years with the Egyptian football association (EFA) in complete shambles and

a war of words erupting about who is to blame for the game's mismanagement. The domestic league is also in disarray and a sexual harassment scandal involving one of its players only rounded off a turbulent tournament for the hosts.

### Forbidden fans

For more than seven years, domestic league matches have been mostly played in ghostly stadiums empty of spectators. Violence in stadiums in 2012 and 2015 in which around 100 people died and the security forces were implicated, led authorities to ban fans from games.

That ban has been relaxed in recent years with small contingents of fans allowed in the stadiums. They are required to present their national IDs and to apply to attend a specific games of their registered club, and that request can be rejected. Mahmoud laments that the control extends to the way supporters interact with the game. "Even some chants for a team or wearing jerseys of specific players is forbidden," he said, referring to iconic Egyptian striker Mohamed Aboutrika.

Hundreds of supporters paid tribute to the legendary player, who retired in 2013 after helping Egypt clinch three African Cups during in the last decade. They chant-

ed his name at matches and in viral clips online. Aboutrika has been in the crosshairs of the government who view him as Muslim Brotherhood sympathizer. The Islamist party was declared a terror group in 2013 after it was toppled from government.

Aboutrika is exiled in Qatar, where he works for Qatari sports network beIN Sports, and he remains on a terror watch list. For Hashem, the golden era has been replaced by a haggard Egypt team lacking vision and unity, even with the presence in its ranks of Liverpool star Mohamed Salah. Hashem has stayed away from the stadium because he does not want his presence to be "exploited" by officials who have gone to great lengths to show off Egypt's tournament organization.

### 'Glory days'

Hani Abou Rida, the embattled president of the Egyptian Football Association (EFA), resigned on Sunday along with his highly criticized board after the Pharaohs lost. Shady Habashy, 33, who hosts a YouTube channel dedicated to reliving the "glory days of world football" called "Tarikh and Korafia" (History and Football-ography) was pleased with the news. His channel is aiming to educate younger generations about how the game was "more beautiful than the one



CAIRO: Egypt supporters watch the 2019 Africa Cup of Nations (CAN) Round of 16 football match between Egypt and South Africa at a cafe in the Egyptian Capital on July 6, 2019. — AFP

played today". "I'm glad that my country is hosting such an event, that it shows off a beautiful picture and that visitors can easily come and go," said Habashy, the father of a six-month old daughter. "But these are foreigners and as an Egyptian, I see things from a different perspective," he added. He blamed Rida, a FIFA Council member, and his cadre of close EFA officials for Egypt's footballing woes, particularly the poor "quality" of players chosen in the squad

which showed a lack of "respect for fans". In his plush apartment in an upmarket Cairo suburb, the devoted Al-Ahly fan watches the Africa Cup of Nations games on his big screen plugged into beIN Sports. He prefers to avoid the hassles of going to watch the matches from the stands for which a Fan ID—a special permit needed to enter the stadiums—is required. "Soccer used to be much better years go for supporters than what we're seeing now," he said. — AFP