



BURKINA FASO FOOTBALL – 2013 & BEYOND : THROWBACK TUESDAY

The 2013 Africa cup of nations was a competition full of the predictable and surprises in equal measures. Egypt, champions in 2006, 2008 and 2010, failed to qualify once again, losing to the Central African Republic in qualifiers. Cote d'Ivoire with the star lineup featuring Didier Drogba and the Touré brothers continued to flatter to deceive, for the time being at least. While Nigeria represented the heavyweights well in their strong showing en route to the final, this was a tournament where outsiders captured the imagination of the viewing public.

The small island nation of Cape Verde shocked by coming undefeated through their group, advancing with South Africa, but ahead of Angola and former champions in Morocco. Though their run was to be ended in the next round, another outsider, Burkina Faso, was to advance much further. Burkina Faso impressed by topping their Group C table, undefeated, advancing ahead of Nigeria in top spot, whilst also eliminating defending champions Zambia in the process.



Mbombela Stadium (ZA)

A battle of the outsiders ensued in the quarter finals as Togo and Emmanuel Adebayor provided the opposition for Burkina Faso. On a difficult, heavily sanded pitch, the tight game went to extra time where it was decided after 115 minutes from a corner set-piece as Jonathan Pitroipa's header ricocheted down off the crossbar just over the line to provide the decisive goal in the contest. Speaking after the game, **The BBC reported** Burkina Faso's coach Paul Put's joy and optimism at the result. –

"It's a dream come true. We were just happy to get to the last eight – that's a result for Burkina Faso... "But I told my players we have a chance to go even further and qualify for the semis and I'm so happy they did it."

The dream semi-final tie was reached as Burkina Faso met Ghana, still riding the wave of their excellent showing in the 2010 World Cup, though looking to return to the final in Johannesburg to avenge their Soccer City elimination from Uruguay at that tournament. Burkina Faso though, had no thoughts of letting their dream run end just yet...

In a tight game many, such as the BBC questioned some dubious refereeing decisions from official Slim Jedidi. Burkina Faso had to overcome a controversially awarded Ghana penalty, whilst being denied several appeals of their own. They also had a goal disallowed from Nakoulma and hero from the quarter-final Pitroipa controversially sent off. Once again on tricky sandy pitch conditions, Ghana struggled to get their fluid passing game going, whilst Burkina Faso, having become accustomed to the pitch in their previous games were always in contention.

However, as both sides ran down the clock through extra time, penalties were needed. In a tense shootout, the Burkinabe were best able to hold their nerve with Daouda Diakité making the crucial to send Burkina Faso to the final and fans into delirium! Burkina Faso captain Charles Kabore was happy to let the controversial incidents of the game and embrace the joy of his teams success.

The referee is human, all humans make mistakes, but he happened to make too many tonight.”... “But we’re not going to dwell on that. We’ve qualified.”

The dream of victory however would not be realized as earlier group rivals Nigeria came back to defeat them 1-0 in the final, with the Burkina Faso players starting to show fatigue from back to back 120+ minute games. Despite the defeat, this tournament was Burkina Faso's finest moment and with key players such as player of the tournament Jonathan Pitroipa and captain Charles Kaboré still in their prime, the side still retains quality.

Though the remaining qualifying fixtures are not due to be played until a 2 month period from August 2017, they will be fixture to be marked in the calendar and not to be missed Burkina Faso look to create a little more footballing history for the team from West Africa.