By Nick Said

Ghana have booked their place in the Africa Cup of Nations final for the first time in 18 years after beating west African rivals Nigeria 1-0 in Luanda on Thursday.

The Super Eagles controlled large parts of the semifinal, but were unable to find a goal after Asamoah Gyan had given Ghana the lead midway through the first half.

The Nigerians have been far from convincing in this tournament, but perhaps the 3-0 win over Mozambique in the group stages, and they could not turn that poor form around against a young, inexperienced Ghana side who appeared to be living off adrenaline alone.

These are heady days for Black Stars fans, with the juniors having won the 2009 FIFA Under-20 World Cup in Egypt recently, and the senior team having first sealed World Cup qualification in South Africa, and now a place in the final of the continental championship.

Ghana saw very little possession in the early stages of tonight's semifinal, but were ahead on 21 minutes. A Kwadwo Asamoah corner was curled towards the near post and Gyan stole in ahead of his marker to nod the ball home.

Nigeria should have been level seven minutes later as Peter Odemwingie tried his luck from 35 yards out. But he succeeded only in hitting it straight at Obafeini Martins, who controlled brilliantly just inside the area but could not beat Richard Kingson in the Ghana goal despite having the time and space to pick his spot.

Odemwingie then missed a fairly simple headed chance, before shooting wide when well placed as Nigeria began to create some clear-cut openings.

It was then Martins' turn to miss two further chances, first with a 35-yard effort which was saved by Super Eagles keeper Richard Kingson, then with another effort from distance.

Ghana were given a lifeline just before the interval, with a Kuffour cross略微 over the bar and Gyan was unable to get a header on target.

Odemwingie then missed again for Nigeria, before Kuffour struck a shot which was saved by Kingson.

The second half saw Nigeria keep their options open, swapping wings frequently and retaining possession, but Ghana were on top.

The Ghanaian forward had a great opportunity when the ball fell to him 12 yards out, but his shot was saved by Goalkeeper Vincent Enyeama.

Nigeria's initial pressure on the Ghanaian goal was rewarded on 56 minutes, with Martins slotted home from close range after he was supplied by Odemwingie.

But Ghana were not done yet, and with just 11 minutes left, they reduced the deficit with a beautiful free-kick from Martin Mensah.

With 10 minutes remaining, the celebrations began in Luanda.

A Kwadwo Asamoah corner was headed towards the goal and a defender netted the ball into the net.

The African Cup of Nations final will take place on Sunday January 31, 2010.

By Kayele M. Kambombo

WINDHOEK

Chipolopolo of Zambia fought heroically but went down with dignity against the Super Eagles of Nigeria.

The Chipolopolo were amongst the four teams (Angola, Malawi and Mozambique) representing the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Zambia lost 5-4 in a penalty shootout against the 2010 World Cup bound Nigeria after a hard fought quarterfinal match that went to extra-time but ended in a goalless stalemate.

It was Zambia's second victory in 20 years, which will come to an end on Sunday when the lucrative prize money will be claimed.

Players get lucrative win-bonuses

The show time for the African football of the most keenly contested football tournaments in the world will come to an end on Sunday when the lucrative prize money will be claimed.

This was indeed a tournament full of drama, agony and ecstasy and it lived to its expectation; it was a fortnight for the real lovers of football.

The football was fast and furious. It was also full of skills. Africa is now recognized as the Third Force in the world football, after Latin America and Europe. Many observers are convinced that African football is the most entertaining of the lot.

Millions of viewers in Africa and Europe were able to watch each match live. Satellites television stations had saturation coverage of the tournament.

Some hundreds journalists from all over the football playing world have attended this tournament.

The 27th Orange African Cup of Nations started on January 10 at the 11th November Stadium in Luanda with a match between hosts Angola and Mali that ended in a 4-all draw. It is unfortunate that the two teams were sent packing.

The matches were also played at other stadium in Benguela, Lubango and Cabinda.

Now it is that time again when the final will be staged in Luanda on Sunday, January 31, 2010 where two African giants will square up, one of which will be crowned the champions of the 27th Orange African Cup of Nations.


In a very interesting and indeed pleasing scenario, Nigeria have budgeted US$22.5 million for 2010 AFCON and have already remunerated their players lucratively for reaching the semi-finals of the African Cup of Nations. Each player pocketed US$30 000 (NS225 000) for getting past the first hurdle and added another NS93 750 for beating Zambia to reach the semi-final. Each of the Super Eagles was promised another NS112 500 if they beat their arch-rivals Black Stars of Ghana to reach the final.

Palancas Negro of Angola were splashed with a whopping NS1,125 000 even though they lost 1-0 against Ghana at the quarterfinals.

Angola's striker Flavio Amando got an inducement of US$30 000 for scoring three goals for his country. Manucho Goncalves and Felisberto Amaral, better known as Gilberto have received NS150 000 respectively for a goal apiece.

Midfielder Jose Alberto and goalkeeper Carlos Fernandes received NS75 000 each while other players of the squad were rewarded with NS375 000 to carry up.

Namibia Today

Black Stars Outshine Super Eagles in Soccer Semifinal

By Kayele M. Kambombo

Hats off to Chipolopolo

Zambia coach Herve Renard says he is keen to take charge of a top African team when his contract expires in July.

The Frenchman, 41, has led his team into their first Africa Cup of Nations quarter-final in 14 years. Despite reviving Chipolopolo, Renard says his ambition is to soon work with a higher profile team than Zambia.

“I know what I want, I'm very ambitious and I'm not scared to say so,” said Renard, who assisted Claude Le Roy with Ghana two years ago.

“I said even before this tournament that I wish to be coach of a very top team one day.”

“Now I can speak English and I'm French, so it's only the Portuguese-speaking countries like Angola and Mozambique that it would be difficult for me to work with because the language is very important.

“But if they qualify for the World Cup, I will sign immediately for them. “But really, I would want to stay in Africa with a bigger team. Claude Le Roy explained to me a few things about Africa.

“Toujours, there are good things and bad things in Africa, but he said his heart is always in Africa. I'm the same now. I like this continent.”

The Frenchman admitted his time with the Chipolopolo of Zambia may soon come to an end.

“Everything the people of SADC have to be proud of, however, is that Zambia qualified for the quarter-finals of the Africa Cup of Nations with a confidence victory over Gabon. They ended top of the Group D table with four points followed by Cameroon and Gabon also at four points while Tanzania have to contend with three points. Hats off to Zambia!”