

Senegal crowned African champions

Mane scores winning kick as Senegal overpower Egypt in shoot-out



YAOUNDE: Senegal's players celebrate with the trophy after winning the Africa Cup of Nations (CAN) 2021 final football match between Senegal and Egypt at Stade d'Olembé in Yaounde on February 6, 2022. — AFP

YAOUNDE: Sadio Mane made up for missing from the spot in normal time to score the decisive penalty as Senegal overcame Mohamed Salah's Egypt 4-2 in a shoot-out to win their first Africa Cup of Nations title after Sunday's final finished goalless at the end of extra time. Mane had seen Mohamed Abou Gabal save his seventh-minute penalty at the Olembe Stadium in Yaounde but Egypt could not capitalise as they went to extra time for the fourth consecutive game at this Cup of Nations.

Salah was due to step up to take Egypt's fifth penalty but with Mohamed Abdelmonem hitting the post and Mohamad Lasheen having his kick saved by Edouard Mendy, the Liverpool star did not get his chance and was already on the verge of tears as his club team-mate Mane prepared to strike the decisive blow.

After two previous final defeats, Senegal are Cup of Nations winners at last, while Egypt missed out on a record-extending eighth continental crown that would also have been a first for Salah. "It just

shows that if you work hard, if you persevere, you will get what you want," Senegal coach Aliou Cisse told broadcaster beIN Sports. "I am very emotional because the people of Senegal have wanted this trophy for 60 years."

Abou Gabal, who was named man of the match, summed up the Egyptian mood, saying: "We are really disappointed but that's football, either you win or you lose." Senegal's celebrations followed a disappointing final, the fifth in the last 11 editions of the tournament to be decided in a shoot-out after a goalless draw. Egypt had already twice won finals that had been settled on penalties after finishing 0-0, and they had already won in the same manner twice in the last fortnight, against the Ivory Coast and Cameroon.

Not Salah's night

This time their luck ran out as the tournament ended at the venue where eight people died and 38 were injured in a crush on January 24. The country's

88-year-old President, Paul Biya, attended the closing ceremony where he was paraded in an open-top car to hysterical crowds along with his wife, First Lady Chantal Biya. FIFA president Gianni Infantino and CAF chief Patrice Motsepe were also present although the biggest cheers were reserved for Cameroon great Samuel Eto'o, now the head of the country's football federation, when his face appeared on the big screens. Eto'o is one of the continent's all-time great footballers, but this final brought together Africa's current superstar duo in Salah and Mane.

Desperate to make up for losing the 2019 final to Algeria, Senegal had a golden early chance to take the lead when outstanding left-back Saliou Ciss was chopped down by Abdelmonem in the box. Mane stepped up, but his kick was too close to the middle of the goal and Abou Gabal was able to save. Salah needed nearly half an hour to make an impact with a jinking run in from the right and a shot easily saved by Mendy, and the Chelsea goalkeeper then pro-

duced an excellent stop to tip a Salah effort over just before half-time.

Carlos Queiroz's Egypt team are masters of the dark arts, regularly looking to waste time, and the Portuguese coach himself was suspended here after losing his temper in the semi-final and being sent off. Their coaching staff pulled the strings on the touchline, moving Salah into a central role after an hour, and substitute centre-forward Marwan Hamdy missed a glorious chance soon after as he headed wide from point-blank range.

By then it was clear that Egypt were willing to go to extra time again, sure that they could rely on more heroics from their goalkeeper. Abou Gabal, nicknamed Gabaski, clawed away Boulaye Dia's 100th-minute header after a fine cross by Ciss, and he also kept out a Bamba Dieng piledriver in the second period of extra time. With Mendy saving from Hamdy at the other end, penalties were inevitable, and it proved to be Senegal's night with Bouna Sarr their only player to miss his kick. — AFP

Shiffrin slides out at Olympics

BEIJING: Double gold medalist Mikaela Shiffrin slid out in her bitterly disappointing opening race at the Beijing Olympics yesterday as two teenagers made their mark on their Games debuts. Kamila Valieva, a 15-year-old Russian, created figure skating history by becoming the first woman to land a quadruple jump in Olympic competition—and not content with doing it once she did it again.

And Californian-born Chinese freestyle skier Eileen Gu, 18, held her nerve to seal a place in the final of the Big Air event on her Games bow. Defending champion Shiffrin was among the favourites to retain the women's giant slalom title and win a third Olympic gold medal of her career, but in bright morning sunshine she made an error near the top of her first run and her race was over.

"There's a huge disappointment, not even counting medals," the 26-year-old said. "The day was finished basically before it even started." Shiffrin vowed to move on and quickly concentrate tomorrow's shorter slalom, a more technical event in which she is a four-time world champion. With Shiffrin out, Sara Hector of Sweden won the giant slalom for her first individual victory at a major championship.

Shiffrin's Norwegian boyfriend Aleksander Aamodt Kilde completed a miserable day for skiing's golden couple when he could only finish fifth in the men's downhill despite starting as favourite. Switzerland's Beat Feuz mastered a treacherous course to win the most prestigious

race in Olympic skiing, improving on his bronze from Pyeongchang four years ago.

Experience counted as the 34-year-old clocked 1min 42.69sec to finish 0.10sec ahead of 41-year-old Frenchman Johan Clarey, who became the oldest man or woman in history to win an Olympic alpine skiing medal. Austria's Matthias Mayer finished third while Kilde was more than half a second adrift of the winner. "The Olympics are a big thing and today it worked for me... It means the world to me," Feuz said. "I can't think of anything more beautiful than flying home with a gold medal around my neck."

At the Big Air Shougang venue, where enormous industrial cooling towers provide a gritty backdrop to the skiers' gravity-defying mid-air moves, Gu took her Olympic bow. The teenager, who has captivated China since switching allegiance from the United States three years ago, misjudged her second attempt, coming down in a tangle on her second run. She responded with a shrug and a smile and, with the pressure on, produced an assured third run to reach Tuesday's final—and give herself a chance of gold. "Oh my god!" she exclaimed to the cameras.

At the Capital Indoor Stadium, Valieva landed the quadruple jumps—when a skater rotates four times in the air—as she helped the Russians win gold in the figure skating team event. All eyes will now be on the teenager in the women's singles event next week to see if she can maintain the Russians' stranglehold on a title they have won at the last two Olympics. — AFP

Dakar explodes with joy



DAKAR: Supporters crowd the roads around the Dakar airport where the Senegalese football is scheduled to arrive after winning, for the first time, the Africa Cup of Nations (CAN). Senegal's President Macky Sall declared yesterday a public holiday to celebrate the national football team's first ever African Cup of Nations crown. — AFP

DAKAR: Dakar exploded with joy at the final whistle as Sadio Mane's Senegal beat Mohamed Salah's Egypt for their first ever Africa Cup of Nations crown. "African champions. What a game! What a team! You did it. Beautiful moment of football, beautiful moment of communion and national pride. Congratulations to our heroes," Senegalese President Macky Sall

tweeted after the Lions' win Sunday night. Sall declared Monday a national holiday to celebrate the "brilliant victory", public television announced. The president, who had been due to visit Comoros at the end of a trip that took in Egypt and Ethiopia, also cancelled the last leg in order to welcome the triumphant Lions on their return to Dakar at 1300 GMT

Monday, RTS television said. Dakar erupted when Liverpool star Mane scored the decisive penalty to give Senegal the win in a shoot-out (4-2) after the final finished goalless at the end of extra time.

Hundreds of supporters in Senegal jerseys flocked to Independence Square, near the presidential palace in the heart of Dakar, to celebrate. — AFP