

already proved their mettle by edging

KCCA vow

Elsewhere, KCCA sent a resounding

sheet in a performance that underlined their attacking depth. The Kasasiro boys were dominant throughout, with their fluid attack

ers to sit, ... depth, the boys have ... we planned. We have worked on scoring more goals and conceding less, and

Bunyaruguru United.

Regulatory test for Africa

Contentious. Morocco were declared Africa Cup of Nations champions after Senegal were ruled to have forfeited the game in Rabat on January 18 because they walked off the pitch in protest at a potentially decisive penalty awarded against them on January 18.

BY LEON SSENYANGE

The memories of the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations (Afcon) final still linger with me; now even more with the recent developments.

See, that night of January 18, I awoke my household with screams after that Panenka episode of Morocco's Brahim Dfaz. There, he had been handed the chance to win his country Africa's coveted football crown. This was going to be a first for Morocco since 1976.

Well, he fluffed it. And minutes later, Senegal pounced. Final score: 1-0 to the Lions of Teranga. For many, it was celebrations. Or better still, justified karma.

Now, days later, Africa wakes up to a decision overturning Senegal's win.

The Confederation of African Football (Caf) Appeal Board overturned the sporting result of the Afcon final and awarded a 3-0 forfeit to Morocco. Possibly celebrations on Rabat, Casablanca and Marrakesh but astonishment elsewhere across the continent and the world.

But the latest drama in African football raises questions on the critical interpretation of the competition regulations.

Caf cited Article 82 of the tournament regulations to justify the verdict.

The regulation states that if, for any reason whatsoever, a team withdraws from the competition or does not report for a match, or refuses to play or leaves the ground before the regular end of the match without the authorization of the referee, it shall be con-

1976
MOROCCO
WON AFCON

sidered loser and shall be eliminated for good from the current competition.

The same had been rejected by the Caf Disciplinary Board in Morocco's initial pursuit for the application of that competition's regulation.

EXTREME

The Senegalese Football Federation have condemned the decision to strip them of their title, calling it «unfair, unprecedented and unacceptable», while the country's government on Wednesday urged an independent international investigation into Caf.

Morocco
defender Noussair
Mazraoui (3)
evades Tanzania's
Simon Msuva.
PHOTO/JOHN
BATANUDE

The issue of contestation is now whether the Senegalese team left the match definitely or temporarily. African football has previously been accorded a situation of definite abandonment has led to forfeiture.

Wydad AC, a Moroccan football club had an appeal dismissed at the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) after they abandoned their Caf Champions League final in 2019 against Tunisia's Esperance SC.

The panel held that Wydad AC players' decision not to resume play after the interruption constituted an abandonment.

But going to Europe, Albania's 2015 offers greater foundation on where forfeiture typically arises and where a refusal is definitive and prevents the match from being completed.

Onto the Caf decision, Article 82 now leaves us with a grey area. From its strict textual reading, the Appeals Board had a justified decision.

But the rule itself appears designed for matches that are not completed. That surely was not the case in that Afcon final.

In comes field-of-play doctrine and Law 5.2 of the Laws of the game that grant autonomy to the referee for on field decisions.

The calm wait by centre referee Jean Jacques Ndala and later resuming the match changes the context of the Caf Appeals Board decision.

Was Senegal's incident a definite or temporary abandonment? That is the dicey issue.

Senegal says it will head to the Court of Arbitration for Sport. Definitely, this keeps the fight on and the wait even longer. This won't be a matter to be decided in weeks or even months.

While we wait, the dispute has become fodder for a heightened rivalry now between the lions; making any next meeting between the two countries a fiery contest.

The writer is a Sports Arbitrator, LLB Student