

# History of the Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON)

## 1. What Is AFCON?

The Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) is the most prestigious international men's football tournament in Africa.

## 2. Early History

- Inaugural tournament: 1957 in Khartoum, Sudan.
- Participants: Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia.
- Winner: Egypt defeated Sudan to win the first title.

## 3. Evolution & Format

- Original format: Only 3 teams in 1957.
- Expansion: Number of teams gradually increased (8, then 16, now 24 teams).
- Qualification rounds: Introduced in 1968.
- Tournament frequency: Originally biennial; moving to a quadrennial schedule from 2028.
- Timing: Often played in winter but dates have shifted due to scheduling and climate factors.

## 4. AFCON Trophies

- Abdel Aziz Abdallah Salem Trophy – first trophy, permanently awarded to Ghana after winning three times.
- African Unity Cup Trophy – permanently awarded to Cameroon in 2000.
- New Cup of Nations trophy – introduced in 2002.

## 5. Most Successful Teams

- Egypt: Most AFCON titles (7).
- Other major multiple-title nations: Cameroon, Ghana, Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire.

## 6. Historic Moments

- 1957: First AFCON, early symbol of African unity and football pride.
- 1996: South Africa's win became symbolic post-apartheid.
- 2010: Political impact — Togo team bus attack disrupted the tournament.

## 7. Format Today

- Teams: 24 national teams in the final tournament.
- Group & Knockout Rounds: Teams are placed in groups and then progress to knockout stages.
- Qualifiers: Held before the final tournament to decide the 24 participants.

## 8. Recent & Future Tournaments

- 2023 AFCON final: Ivory Coast vs Nigeria ended with a 2-1 win for Ivory Coast.
- 2025 AFCON: Set in Morocco (Rabat hosting final).
- 2027 AFCON: Planned in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania.
- Future changes: Tournament moves to every four years from 2028 for better coordination with the global football calendar.

## 9. Legacy & Cultural Impact

AFCON is more than sport — it has been a platform for:

- National pride
- Post-colonial identity
- Unity through football across diverse African nations.