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Africa Cup Semi-Final Preview: Nigeria – Senegal

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02/05/2002.
 AT STAKE:

This will be a tense clash between two strong nations with both teams believing this is their tournament. Cynical

fouls, smart passes and strong man marking are the expected aspects as well as fanatical support from their compatriots in the stands.

Both teams have a lot of vehement supporters. [Senegal](#) supporters have greater access to come over the border to cheer their rising superstar team. [Nigeria](#) on the other hand is a very popular team on the continent and a large number of Nigerians themselves are going to be there to spur their great team on.

Nigeria missed many good chances in their quarterfinal match against Ghana but with their satisfactory performance, they made it to



Crowded Out - Aghahowa Can Make The Difference For The Super Eagles... (AP)

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...this stage thanks to a vital 75th minute goal from Garba Lawal. Amodu Shaibu will be hopeful that his side will be ready to give up their very best to secure a place in the finals.

Senegal have actually enjoyed a moment of glory as they have broken a very new ground ever since their appearance in the nations cup. Coach Bruno Metsu was not very optimistic that his side will beat D.R.Congo to proceed to the last four, but even though the team has been convincing, he is still not relaxed about his team's performance. Facing Nigeria is really a big task just as the Nigerians themselves.

TEAM NEWS:**- Nigeria:**

Coach Amodu Shaibu is expected to field the same players that started the last match against Ghana. Murphy Akanji in their last match replaced goalkeeper, Ike Shurunmu as he suffered from pains after colliding with defender Issac Okoronwo. Shurunmu is expected to have recovered by then and should be among the starting line-up for Thursday's match.

Probable Line-Up: Shorunmu, Okoronkwo, Udeze, West, Yobo, Finidi, Lawal, Okocha, Oliseh, Kanu, Aghahowa.

Bench: Akanji, Ejiofor, Ojigwe, Oruma, Agali, Aiyegbeni, Babanjida.

- Senegal:

Coach Bruno Metsu is not expected to make much changes from the side that won against D.R. Congo in the quarterfinals. Fadiga has proved to have recovered from the muscular pains he suffered earlier in the tournament and he played full time in the 2 – 0 win again DRC.

Probable Line-Up: Sylva, Daf, Coly, Cisse, Diatta, Fadiga, Sarr, Diao, Ndiaye, Camara, Diouf.

Bench: Diallo, Ndour, Diop, Faye, Boubou Diop, Thiaw, Souleymane Camara.

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FORM GUIDE:

Nigeria: previous 4 matches: WDW. The Super Eagles have done well in their last two matches securing vital points against Liberia in the group stage, and Ghana, to secure a place in the semifinals. The first win came in their first match of the tournament when they beat Algeria and they secured a draw against the hosts, Mali.

Senegal: previous 4 matches: WDD. Senegal has a similar tally to that of Nigeria, winning three matches and a draw in one. Their first two winnings were against Egypt and Zambia. Knowing that had already gone to the quarterfinals, they could secure a goalless draw against Tunisia with what looked like their second team. A vital win against D.R. Congo put them through to the semifinals.

PLAYERS WATCH:

- Nigeria: Julius Aghahowa has emerged to be a reliable striker, a man with vision and virility in front of goal. Okocha still continues to execute his dribbling skills exactly like the ones in France and Kanu also is a subtle and poisonous player with great wall-passes.

-Senegal: Khalilou Fadiga is an active force at par with the gallant Nigeria players in terms of strength and gut. Even though his character is now disturbed by a lot of offside, El Hadj Diouf has a lot of scoring abilities. He would want to make a mark against Nigeria and Super-sub - young Souleymane Camara is always there to do his best whenever he comes in.

SOCCERAGE PREDICTION:

It will be a bit hard to predict which side will win this match. Nigeria is in theory a superior team to Senegal but their performances in the previous matches are not very much satisfactory. The runners-up of the last nations cup have been suffering lack of scoring even though they have managed to create a lot of good chances. Even though it is likely that Nigeria will win, Senegal are going to post one of their best match performances against the Super Eagles.

Nigeria 2 Senegal 1

Ibrahim Dabo

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