

# Senegal stripped of Africa Cup of Nations title two months after final, Morocco declared champions

**NEW DELHI:** Senegal have been stripped of their 2025 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) title and Morocco, their opponents in the final, have been declared champions in an extraordinary decision announced by the Confederation of African Football (CAF) on Tuesday. Morocco had lost that match 1-0 on January 18 in the country's capital of Rabat, but that was after Senegal had staged a walkout, led by their coach Pape Thiaw, over a contentious penalty that was awarded to the former in injury time.



It is this walkout, which delayed the final by 15 minutes, that has eventually led to them being stripped of the title. The CAF's Appeals Board decided that Senegal had forfeited the match, with the result now being recorded as 3-0 in

favour of Morocco. The Moroccan football federation - Fédération Royale Marocaine de Football (FRMF), had initially appealed to the CAF's Disciplinary Board which had been rejected. However, their position that Senegal had violated Article 82 of the regulations for the tournament was then accepted by the CAF's Appeals Board.

It said the conduct

of the Senegal team fell "within the scope of Articles 82 and 84 of the Regulations of the Africa Cup of Nations", which state that "if, for any reason whatsoever, a team refuses to play or leaves the ground before the regular end of the match without the authorisation of the referee, it shall be considered the loser and shall be eliminated for good from the current competition".

Senegal have announced that they will be taking the matter up at the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), seeking to overturn CAF's decision.

The chaotic scenes towards the end of the match was sparked by referee Jean-Jacques Ndala awarding a penalty to Morocco after

Brahim Diaz had been tugged to the ground by Senegal fullback El Hadji Malick Diouf while defending a corner five minutes into stoppage time with the score still reading 0-0. The referee had made the decision after checking the touchline screen, during which time players and officials from both sides jostled with each other. When Ndala walked back to the field and pointed to the penalty spot, Senegal head coach Thiaw led his players

off the field.

Former Liverpool forward and Senegal talisman Sadio Mane was among the players who persuaded Thiaw and the rest of the players to return to the field. Diaz eventually took a rather tame penalty that was saved by goalkeeper Edouard Mendy. The match went into extra time in which Pape Gueye scored for Senegal in the 94th minute. That turned out to be the only goal of the match.

Tensions ran high throughout the match and it boiled over after the walkout. In a rather bizarre incident, the ball boys attempted to steal the towels of the Senegal goalkeeper, leading to the latter's second goalkeeper Yehvann Diouf being seen keeping them in their hands for large parts of the match.

## Ding Liren after dropping out of FIDE ratings list: 'Quite enjoy my current situation, having inactive rating'

**NEW DELHI:** Former world champion Ding Liren, a predecessor on the chess world's throne before India's D Gukesh, was recently removed from the FIDE ratings list because of him having played too few games to be considered an "eligible" player for the list.

Ding, though, has no qualms at this. In fact, in an interview recently, he opened up about enjoying his current situation.

"I quite enjoy my current situation. What I mean is, being a player with an inactive rating, who seldom participates in elite invitationals. I'm enjoying this rare moment of leisure," Ding told Jonathan Zhi in a written interview.

Ding had become the 17th world champion after outlasting Ian Nepomniachtchi in the 2023 World Chess Championship. But a year later, Ding lost the crown to India's Gukesh in Singapore. Ding's world championship defeat had come after he had experi-



enced a wretched run of form right after he became world champion. His own predecessor on the world chess throne, Magnus Carlsen had even gone on to say that he feared Ding was "permanently broken."

At the 2024 World Chess Championship against Gukesh, Ding had stunned the chess world by winning the first game. His defeat to Gukesh was not a slam dunk as had been predicted by others. He had, in fact, only let go of the dream of remaining world champion in the 14th and final game of the World

Championship, where had made a blunder in the endgame.

Asked about his motivations these days, Ding replied: "I keep up playing the occasional game online: it doesn't require arduous pre-game preparation, just undivided concentration in the moment. The process itself is rewarding."

When asked what advice he would give his past self, Ding said: "I wish my younger self had studied more and persisted in academics a bit longer, not letting it fall to the wayside. That way, later years of life might be richer."

## Buttler 'still has England ambitions' despite T20 World Cup slump

**NEW DELHI:** Jos Buttler is hopeful that England's T20 World Cup semi-final defeat to India was not the final appearance of his international career but has acknowledged that there are no guarantees he will be picked for their next white-ball series in July.

Buttler was desperately out of form at the World Cup, making 87 runs in eight innings, and has scored a single half-century in his past four ICC events. But he has another 18 months left to run on his ECB central contract and said that he hopes to be involved when England face India in five T20Is and

three ODIs during their home summer.

"I hope so," Buttler said on his podcast, For the Love of Cricket. "I don't know. Obviously I had a poor tournament, which is disappointing, but I've been playing some of the best cricket of my [career] in recent years, so hopefully I can get back to playing my best."

"I certainly have ambitions [to continue playing for England] but no longer being a captain, I'm not a selector and whatever, so what will be will be. Yeah, we will see."

Buttler said that he had spent a week "up the moun-

ains" with his family in France to switch off from cricket after returning from the World Cup, and will travel back to India on Saturday to prepare for the IPL season with Gujarat Titans.

"I couldn't have been further away from cricket, which for me at the time was just perfect. It's exactly what I needed," Buttler said. "Obviously the tournament didn't go personally how I'd have liked it to go, and I just felt like I needed some space from cricket and not to think about the game, and I could not have been further away from cricket where I was in that week."

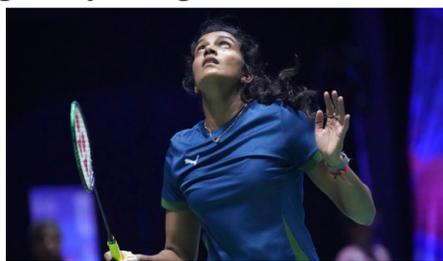
"It was really refreshing - I really enjoyed it, a complete sort of release. And slowly but surely, I'd say at the start of this week, [I am] just starting to reflect a bit and have a few thoughts about what's important to me and my cricket, and why it probably didn't go quite as I would've liked."

"There's elements [to what went wrong] that I actually don't really know exactly. For all your best intentions and hard work and efforts to perform, it just didn't work, and sometimes that's okay as well. That's something I've had to realise. It wasn't for a lack of effort."

## 'I might sound mean, but...': Ace shuttler PV Sindhu's honest message to young athletes on studies and sport

**NEW DELHI:** Star Indian shuttler PV Sindhu emphasised the need to have a good education for aspiring athletes, warning that it is too "risky" to ignore academics and focus solely on a sporting career that can end with a single injury.

"I have been playing for so many years. At some point of time you have to retire, right? And that's the truth. You can't be playing sport when you're 45 or 50 or 60 at the highest level. And you have to accept that fact, whereas education will always be lifelong with you, and that will always stay with you," said the two-time Olympic medallist at DPS



International, while speaking to educationist Devyani Jaipuria. "Nobody is born with a golden spoon and you have to work hard, whether it is in studies or sports...Studies and sports are equally important."

is a very small thing, right? Life-long, you know, you will always have an education by your side. Sport is also important, but not that, you know, completely stop your studies," said Sindhu.

"I might sound mean, maybe they might not understand now, but in the later stage in their life, they will understand that, yes, studies are also important. Because sport sometimes, it's very risky where sometimes you have an injury and you never know how it goes... your life might end, you might have a surgery...injuries...they don't tell you and come, it just happens."

## Molineux set to return but full all-round role remains uncertain

**NEW DELHI:** Sophie Molineux's hard launch as Australia captain could come as a batter only, with the tourists preparing to play it safe with the all-rounder in the West Indies.

After captaining Australia for the three T20Is against India last month before the retiring Alyssa Healy's return for the ODI and Test, Molineux has now officially taken over.

The 28-year-old is expected to play all three T20Is against West Indies in St Vincent on return from a lower-back injury, before her availability for three ODIs in St Kitts is reassessed.

But Australia have left the door open for Molineux to play as a batter only during games on this tour, with a T20 World Cup three months away and the Victorian having a long injury history.

"It's probably a see how



we go," Molineux said. "Especially towards the back end with the one-dayers. We'll just keep assessing. I am looking forward to being back out there with the girls."

"It was hard to watch that Test, especially not being part of Midge [Healy]'s last game for Australia. It will be great to get back out there again."

Not bowling would mark a significant change for Molineux, who broke into the

team with her spin in 2018 and has bowled in every international she has played.

But Australia are desperate to have her around the group, with this tour the first time the squad is truly her's after Healy's retirement at the end of the home multi-format series against India.

"It's an important series for all of us," Molineux said. "We haven't got a whole lot of games before that T20 World Cup."

## The Biggest Dinosaurs Left Their Babies to Be Eaten

A new study led by a UCL (University College London) researcher suggests that baby and very young sauropods played a major role in sustaining predators during the Late Jurassic. Sauropods were long necked, long tailed plant eaters that grew into the largest animals ever to walk on land, but their offspring were small, vulnerable, and abundant.

The research was published in the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science Bulletin and draws on fossil evidence dating back about 150 million years. These fossils come from the Morrison Formation [1] in the United States and were used to reconstruct a detailed food web showing how animals and plants were connected through feeding relationships.

Vulnerable Young in a Dangerous World

The researchers found



that newly hatched and juvenile sauropods were especially important prey. These young dinosaurs were largely defenseless and appear to have been left on their own, making them an easy target for several species of meat-eating dinosaurs.

Lead author Dr. Cassius Morrison of UCL Earth Sciences explained why this imbalance existed. He said: "Adult sauropods such as the Diplodocus and Brachiosau-

rus were longer than a blue whale. When they walked the earth would shake. Their eggs, though, were just a foot wide, and once hatched, their offspring would take many years to grow.

"Size alone would make it difficult for sauropods to look after their eggs without destroying them, and evidence suggests that, much like baby turtles today, young sauropods were not looked after by their parents."

## 773,000-Year-Old Moroccan Fossils Pinpoint a Critical Moment in Human Evolution

An international team of researchers has identified and analysed newly discovered hominin fossils from Thomas Quarry I (Casablanca, Morocco).

Using advanced geological dating methods, the team determined that the fossils are 773,000 plus/minus 4,000 years old.

This unusually precise age estimate comes from a detailed magnetostratigraphic record that captures the Brunhes/Matuyama boundary, the most recent major reversal of Earth's magnetic field, along with well-established time markers from the Quaternary period.

Published in Nature, the findings place these African populations near the very beginning of the evolutionary branch that later produced Homo sapiens. In doing so, the study offers important new evidence about the shared ancestry of H. sapiens, Neandertals, and Denisovans.

The study was led by Jean-Jacques Hublin (Collège de France & Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology), David Lefèvre (Université de Mont-



pellier Paul Valéry), Giovanni Muttoni (Università degli Studi di Milano), and Abderrahim Mohib (Moroccan Institut National des Sciences de l'Archéologie et du Patrimoine, INSAP).

Decades of Moroccan-French fieldwork led to major new discoveries

The discoveries are the result of more than thirty years of sustained archaeological and geological research carried out under the Moroccan-French Program "Préhistoire de Casablanca". This long-running initiative has involved extensive

excavations, careful stratigraphic documentation, and broad geoarchaeological studies across the southwestern area of Casablanca.

Over time, this systematic and methodical work revealed the remarkable stratigraphic, environmental, and archaeological richness of Thomas Quarry I. These efforts eventually led to the recovery of the hominin fossils and the geological sequences that form the basis of the current analysis.

The present study was also supported by the Università degli Studi di Milano (Italy), the Max-

Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology (Germany), the LabEx Archimède - University of Montpellier Paul Valéry, the University of Bordeaux, and the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle (France).

A unique geological setting: the Moroccan Atlantic coast as a Pleistocene treasure house

Jean-Paul Reynal, who co-directed the program during the excavations that uncovered the fossils, highlights the broader significance of the site.

He notes that "Thomas Quarry I lies within the raised coastal formations of the Rabat-Casablanca littoral, a region internationally renowned for its exceptional succession of Plio-Pleistocene palaeoshorelines, coastal dunes and cave systems."

These landscapes were shaped by repeated sea level changes, wind-driven sedimentation, and the rapid cementation of coastal sands, processes that together created ideal conditions for preserving fossils and archaeological remains.

portant archives of Pleistocene life. The area documents early Acheulean stone tool traditions and their later developments, shifting animal communities that reflect environmental change, and multiple periods of hominin occupation.

Within this context, Thomas Quarry I, excavated into the Oulad Hamida Formation, stands out for containing the oldest Acheulean industries in north-western Africa, dated to roughly 1.3 million years ago. The site is also located near other well-known localities such as Sidi Abderrahmane, a classic reference point for Middle Pleistocene prehistory in Northwest Africa. Within this larger complex, the "Grotte à Homínidés" is especially significant.

David Lefèvre explains it is "a unique cave system carved by a marine highstand into earlier coastal formations and later filled with sediments that preserved hominin fossils in a secure, undisturbed, and undisputed stratigraphic context," providing rare clarity about the age and setting of these early human remains.

## Scientists Found a Surprising Way to Track Falling Space Junk

Thousands of discarded, human-made objects remain in orbit around Earth, and when pieces of this space debris fall back to the surface, they can pose real dangers to people. To better identify where debris might land, a scientist at Johns Hopkins University has helped develop a new tracking approach that uses existing networks of earthquake monitoring instruments.

This technique relies on seismometers that are already spread across the ground. Compared with current systems, the method can deliver more detailed information in near real-time than authorities have today—information that can speed up efforts to find and recover debris that may be burned, broken, or hazardous.

"Re-entries are happening more frequently. Last year, we had multiple satellites entering our atmosphere each day, and we don't have independent verification of where they entered, whether they broke up into pieces, if they burned up in the atmosphere, or if they made it to the ground," said lead author Benjamin Fernandez, a postdoctoral research fellow who studies earthquakes on Earth, Mars, and other planets in the Solar System. "This is a growing problem, and it's going to keep getting worse."

The results were published in the journal Science on January 22.

Using Earthquake Sensors to Follow Falling Spacecraft Fernandez and his colleague Constantinos Charalambous, a research fellow at Imperial College London, demonstrated the method by analyzing debris from China's Shenzhou-15 spacecraft. The spacecraft's orbital module reentered Earth's atmosphere on April 2, 2024. At roughly 3.5 feet wide and weighing more than 1.5 tons, the object was large enough to potentially threaten people on the ground, the researchers said.

When space debris enters the atmosphere, it travels faster than the speed of sound. This produces sonic booms, or shock waves, similar to those created by fighter jets. As the object races toward Earth, these shock waves send vibrations through the ground, triggering seismometers along the path. By identifying which sensors were activated and when, scientists can trace the debris' route, determine its direction of travel, and estimate where it may have landed.

Reconstructing Speed, Altitude, and Breakup The team analyzed data from 127 seismometers in southern California to calculate the module's speed and trajectory. The debris tore through the atmosphere at Mach 25-30, moving northeast over Santa Barbara and Las Vegas at roughly ten times the speed of the fastest jet aircraft.

The strength of the seismic signals also helped the researchers estimate the object's altitude and determine where it broke apart. Using this information together with trajectory and speed data, they concluded that the module traveled about 25 miles north of the path predicted by U.S. Space Command, which is based on orbital measurements taken before reentry.

