

Three African teams could represent Africa during 2019 Rugby World Cup in Japan

Across 6 countries in 15 two-legged match

Paris, Washington DC, 29.11.2017, 20:05 Time

USPA NEWS - Across six countries in fifteen two-legged matches, the 2018 Rugby Africa Gold Cup promises seven days of intense matches pitting Africa's top six men's rugby union nations against each other between 16 June and 18 August 2018. The stakes are particularly high this year, since the 2018 African champion will automatically qualify for the 2019 World Cup in Japan (<https://www.RugbyWorldCup.com>), though the runner-up will participate in a last chance bracket tournament.

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A total of three teams will thus have the opportunity to bear the colours of Africa in the 2019 Rugby World Cup, since South Africa has already qualified. "The fixtures for the 2018 Rugby Africa Gold Cup have been scheduled in consultation with the participating federations and our media partner, Kwese Sports. Numerous factors had to be considered for such a busy sporting period, such as the dates of international windows for releasing club players to their national teams and particularly the Rugby World Cup Sevens, which is scheduled to be held between 20 and 22 July. This explains the pause between 7 July and 4 August", stated Guédel N'Diaye, Rugby Afrique Competition Committee Director (www.RugbyAfrique.com). "The rules remain the same for the 2017 season, in that the top three teams will play three home matches and two away matches, while the teams ranked fourth through sixth will travel three times&only host two home matches", specified Guédel N'Diaye.

THE FINAL STANDINGS AT THE END OF THE 2017 SEASON IS AS FOLLOWS-----

- 1 Namibia
- 2 Kenya
- 3 Uganda
- 4 Tunisia
- 5 Zimbabwe
- 6 Morocco (promoted from the Rugby Africa Silver Cup)

AN ENHANCED LEVEL OF PLAY WITH PRIMETIME VISIBILITY-----

"The 2017 Rugby Africa Gold Cup was a genuine success for African rugby in general", exclaimed Rugby Africa President Abdelaziz Bougja. "The increased playing time for our flagship competition, with the number of matches going from 6 in 2015 to 15 this year, has been a catalyst for the actual pitch performance of Africa's best rugby nations. We have been treated to amazing and often close-scoring matches. And make no mistake about it, fans are showing up at the stadiums and also tuning in to live broadcasts of all the matches by our Pan-African media partner Kwese Sports or via Facebook".-----

The Rugby Africa Gold Cup rankings follow a points system (win, tie, loss and bonus points) with other criteria in case of two or three-way ties. The winner is in any case the team who scores the most at the end of the tournament. There is no final match to determine the champion, so the suspense builds regarding the final ranking of all the teams until the final second of the last match. While Namibia has qualified for the last five Rugby World Cups, competition will certainly be harsh, as five other countries have serious designs for the title of African Champion. The 2018 Rugby Africa Gold Cup is thus promising to showcase top quality rugby that is engaging and full of excitement. Over the past decade, rugby's popularity and television viewing figures have grown steadily in Africa. The Rugby World Cup is the third most popular sporting event in the world behind the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup. Over four billion people around the world will watch these matches on television and see how two, and perhaps even three African teams fare.-----

"As Official Partner of Rugby Africa, we will do our best to ensure that all Africans know that 2018 will be the year in which the best African teams will face off to earn the privilege to represent Africa at the 2019 Rugby World Cup, the world's third largest sporting event", stated Nicolas Pompiagne-Mognard, founder and CEO of the APO Group, Official Partner of Rugby Africa.

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-12494/three-african-teams-could-represent-africa-during-2019-rugby-world-cup-in-japan.html>

Editorial office and responsibility:

V.i.S.d.P. & Sect. 6 MDSStV (German Interstate Media Services Agreement): Rahma Sophia Rachdi, J Foster

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Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619