



# 2018 ITTF AFRICAN CHAMPIONSHIPS

MAURITIUS 2018



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The Nigerian team celebrating their victory

## Nigeria, Egypt pick slots in World Team Cup

**N**IGERIA put every foot forward against Egypt in the men's final of the ITTF African Championships as the Segun Toriola-inspired team defeated the North African 3-1 to qualify for the 2019 ITTF World Team Cup in Tokyo, Japan.

However, the women's team was unlucky as they fell 1-3 to the Egyptians in the final to concede the Tokyo slot to the Egyptians.

From the start of the men's final, it was Aruna

Quadri that boosted Nigeria's confidence with a close 3-2 win over Ahmed Saleh.

But the Egyptians leveled the match with Mohammed El-Beiali beatin Bode Abiodun 3-0 to put the encounter at 1-1.

Old warlord and the captain of the Nigeria team turned the tide against the Egyptians with a crucial comeback against Khaled Assar. It was Assar that was dominating from the start but the experience of Toriola was handy as he rallied back to win the encounter at 3-2 to give Nigeria a 2-1 lead.

What Aruna Quadri started was completed as the ITTF Nigeria Open champion fought well against Egypt's El-Beiali with a 3-2 win to qualify Nigeria to the World Team Cup.

A disappointed Ahmed Saleh told NationSport that it was a painful loss especially the loss by Assar to Toriola. "I am so disappointed that we could not retain our title because we had thought we could pick the third game against Toriola. I am not too happy but that is table tennis and we will come back to fight again," Saleh said.



Abdul-Aziz Farah

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## Mtshoelibe twins....aiming to be best in Rainbow Nation

**T**WENTY-year-old Mtshoelibe twins of South Africa - Mthabiseng and Thabisile may not have won several matches at the 2018 ITTF African Championships in Mauritius, but they are hoping to be the top players from the Rainbow nation.

According to them, they are in the Indian Ocean nation to pick up new skills as well as work harder to be the best in South Africa.

From their province in KwaZulu-Natal in Ladysmith, a coastal South African province, the Mtshoelibe twins are champion and even in their club; Logiso Table Tennis Association, they continued to dominate but their romance with table tennis was fanned by their older sister - Thulile Shabangu, a former member of the South African national team. "We actually started table tennis in 2008 through our sister who used to travel with the national team to several competitions. She started taking us along with her to training and we fell in love with the game. It was same year that we competed at the SA National Championship as cadets. But our journey with the national team junior team started in 2011 when I was part of the team to the African Junior Championship," says Mthabiseng.

From her maiden appearance for South Africa in international tournament, Mthabiseng was also part of the team at the 2016 World Junior Championship in Cape Town while her presence in Mauritius made it the third time she would be travelling with the team and her first senior outing with the team.

Unlike Mthabiseng, Thabisile is more experienced having made the SA team to the 2014 World Team Championship in Yokohama, Japan; she has established herself in the team having edged out regulars in the SA team during the recent trials.

The twin however, acknowledged the huge support they have been getting from their parents. "Our parents have been very supportive of our romance with table tennis. Apart from making us to travel across globe, table tennis has taken us away from social vices in our Province. It has impacted us positively that we now engage ourselves in meaningful activities," said Mthabiseng.

With a modest dream of conquering SA, the Mtshoelibe twins are not day dreaming as they are eager to become the best players in South Africa before aiming for the continent. "We are here in Mauritius to learn from the best players. Our main aim now is to become the best players in South Africa and we have seen in this competition that to be the best you have to work harder and train well, we must also be focused," said Thabisile.

Admiring the quality of Nigeria's Aruna Quadri, the Mtshoelibe twins believe they are on the right track of fulfilling their dream.



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## I was carried away handling Aruna's match, admits teenage umpire

By Olalekan Okusan

**A**T 16, Sadoolah Zaynah is having one of the best times of her life at the 2018 ITTF African Championships holding in Mauritius. She is not taking part in the team event for Mauritius but she is a good ambassador as one of the umpires handling proceedings at the African show-piece.

Always excited to go on table and in a rare chance for the grade 11 student of SSS Ebene Girls, she was assigned to handle the semifinal tie between Nigeria and Algeria and she was opportuned to watch her idol - Aruna Quadri (NGR) live.

"I was so happy that in the last three days I cannot hide my feeling particularly handling match involving Africa's best player - Aruna Quadri (NGR). I was so happy that not many people had the chance to watch Aruna plays live but for me I handled the match and I enjoyed every

moment I spent on centre court," she admitted.

Despite not formally trained for the task, Sadoolah Zaynah believes her interest in umpiring has grown. "Few days to the competition, I was told as volunteer that I will be one of the umpires that will handle proceedings in the competition. Initially I was bit nervous particularly on the first day. But as the tournament progresses I gained confidence and I started falling in love with the work," she said.

Unable to hide her excitement handling Aruna Quadri's match, she said: "I was a bit nervous when I realized I will be in charge of the match involving Aruna Quadri. I never had the opportunity to watch him play live matches. But as an umpire, I was given that chance and when I got into the centre court I was initially under pressure but when the match started I gained my confidence. But there was a scenario in the match, when Aruna won a very crucial point, I

wanted to show my excitement but I realized I was an umpire. So I quickly conduct myself. I cannot forget every moment of the match because it will remain with me forever. Aruna was such a good player because I can never imagined how sometimes he managed to return some balls to the table. His topspin forehand is unique and I cherished every point he won and I hope I can get more chance like this to be in charge of his matches," she enthused.



THE EXCITEMENT OF VICTORY

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