

## Soccer fans turn to Africa

*Tunisia kicks off the 2004 African Cup of Nations with a spectacular opening ceremony*

[Fadhel Kaboub](#) Jan . 26 . 2004

Sixty-thousand soccer fans attended the opening ceremony of the 2004 African Cup of Nations in Tunis, capital of Tunisia, on Saturday (Jan. 23). The colorful choreography of 2,500 youth was put together by the same artists who organized the 2002 World Cup. The ceremony ended with a powerful blast of fireworks setting the stage for the greatest soccer competition in Africa.

Tunisia won the tournament's opening game with difficulty against newcomer Rwanda (2-1) after the two teams were reduced to 10 players a side.



*The African Cup Trophy*

Tunisia played most of the game without its star defender Hatem Trabelsi (Ajax Amsterdam) who is recovering from an injury. The loudest roar of the evening came as Trabelsi made his first appearance in 3 months with his national team, 5 minutes before the game ended.

Cameroon, four-time champion, was caught in a 1-1 draw by a well-prepared Algerian team. Egypt, four-time champion, had to score twice to come back from a goal down against Zimbabwe (2-1). Guinea won against DR Congo (2-1).

Cameroon, Tunisia, Egypt, Nigeria, South Africa, and Senegal are among the serious contenders for this year's tournament. Tunisia made it twice to the final championship game but lost in 1965 to Ghana 3-2, and in 1996 to South Africa 2-0 in OT. The 2004 final will take place on Feb. 14 in Tunis.

After a successful organization of the 2001 Mediterranean Games, Tunisia is putting out its best organizational show once again, trying to convince FIFA to support its candidacy to organize the 2010 World Cup, and become the first African nation to host the World Cup.

Check out The Kansas City Aurora Sports section for more updates on the 2004 African Cup of Nations.



*The 2004 African Cup Mascot*