

## AFRICAN ASSOC. – IBO-UNION SOCCER TOURNAMENT AND FESTIVAL

### CHAMPIONSHIP FINALS

#### A REVIEW

For the sixth year in a row, the African Association – Ibo-Union Soccer Tournament was successfully completed without a hitch. The elite teams showed up to show why they are in the upper echelon of Africa-USA soccer.

As the ‘Arab spring’ is happening in Egypt, Tunisia, Syria, Yemen and Bahrain, some teams were undergoing their own ‘internal combustion’, and either did not show up, or did so in total disarray.

Adjustment completed, the games started with the same zeal and vigor. Cameroun and Sierra Leone not having succeeded in forming their respective squads, combined to form a formidable challenge as Lion/Leone Stars.

After the round robin which allowed each team to play three games, the semi-final was a thriller as up and coming Ghana tried to overthrow the combined force of Lion/Leone Stars. But their inexperienced young strikers were unable to fully penetrate the defense of Lion/Leone Stars commanded by a brutal master defender in Carlet Enang. In the end, Ghana fell 3-1 but proud to have displayed their talents.

The final was the game all waited to watch despite the looming dark clouds. Bay Area FC, the two time champions, marshaled against the Lion/Leone Stars, the two time runners up. Bay Area FC narrowly lost to Bay Area Liberia in 2010 and vowed to return in 2011 with vengeance. Nothing was to stop them. At the beginning, the teams seemed matched but Bay Area FC (BAFC) quickly unleashed constant pressure that was easily neutralized by Lion/Leone Stars (LLS) defense. Towards the end of the first half, a miscue by the LLS defense when Carlet Enang pushed forward to enable a goal, led to a break through with BAFC ceasing the opportunity to score. At the half, it was BAFC- 1, LLS- 0.

Quite unusual for the season, at the half it started to rain. However, Master Referee Ugo-Harris Opara was in full control and uneventfully started the second half. With the rain off and on, it was show-time for both teams. The LLS unleashed on the BAFC defense, determined to level the score. Their forward youngsters lacked the experience to finish. Meanwhile the BAFC capitalized on their wealth of experience and introduced an ever winning tactics rarely seen at these events. The eleven man attack-defense tandem force with no breathing space in between. At this point veteran defender Enang was having difficulty staving off the attack. Then the unthinkable happened. He fell and sprained his knee in the relentless BAFC attack. This was the opportunity BAFC was waiting for and they did not disappoint as they unleashed wave after wave of attacks led by a veteran sweeper. The LLS Goalkeeper sprang into action with save after save. As two more goals passed through the LLS keeper, a consolation goal by LLS could not do the trick. The final score was BAFC-3 and LLS-1. For the third time in six years, Bay Area FC is 2011 tournament Champions!

The LLS Boys were disappointed but satisfied at their performance. They vowed the result will be different in 2012.

The tournament Chairman, Chief 'Davey Way' Ibeabuchi presented the Champions Cup to the Captain of BAFC, Samuel Kehinde and it was jubilation!!

Ghana, growing in strength and talent is the team to watch. With a little more experience in their strike force, they are bound to create havoc in the next two to three years.

We extend our heartfelt and sincere gratitude to all those who volunteered and contributed to make this tournament a success:

IBO UNION Organizing Committee: Emeka Chukwu, Martin Nnam, Henry Chukwu, Louis Onwe and Uche

Tournament Officials: UgoHarris Opara, Emeka Chukwu, David Ibeabuchi, Roddy Lopez and Kelly Nwachukwu.

To the music men who provided the Afro-Caribbean sounds: Kinnie Anthony and DJ Senesie.

African cuisine by Mrs Chukwu. And all others not mentioned who may have in one way or another contributed their widow's mite.

To the fans and spectators who took their time to come out to support their various teams.

Hip hip-hurray! Hip hip-hurray!! Hip hip-hurray!!!.....

Uche.