



# 2020-ITTF Africa Top 16 Cup

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DAY ONE

## Let the show begin

**A**LL the players have arrived. The venue is set. And the atmosphere is charged. It is the 2020 ITTF Africa Top Cup 16, and it serves off today in Rades, Tunis, the capital city of the North African nation, Tunisia.

From Omar Assar to Dina Meshref who are defending champions in the men and women events respectively, the field is stronger now and things are certainly looking tougher here for would-be conquerors of Africa.

With the presence of Africa's best ranked player in the world, Aruna Quadri of Nigeria, coupled with the most improved player on the continent, Ibrahima Diaw of Senegal, as well as other title contenders competing in Tunis, securing the ultimate glory in this tournament is as challenging as never before.

To Meshref, who is the most successful player in the competition having won the last three editions in Nigeria, Sudan and Kenya, the standard of play now makes it harder for any player to clinch the title.

"I think it is more challenging for any player to win the title. But for me I just need to focus on my game in the tournament with the hope of achieving



new things. I am going to play my game and hope that I can do better," she said.

Similarly, Diaw who is making his debut in the competition, admitted that winning tournament has

become tougher in Africa now. "I think playing in Africa has really improved my

game and I hope I can do well in the tournament. I am really looking forward to an exciting time in

Tunisia, especially with the warm welcome I got from the hosts since I arrived," he said.





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## It's getting tougher to win titles in Africa, admits Ahmed Saleh

**A**HMED Saleh is one of the celebrated table tennis players in Africa. Though he is 40 years old, the Egyptian star is not ready to call it quit with the game yet, as he is pumped up to slug it out with the younger heavyweights of the sport at the on-going 2020 ITTF Africa Top 16 Cup in Tunis, capital of Tunisia.

Saleh, who is seeded number two in the men's singles event, said with the current crop of players on the continent, claiming titles in any major event had become more difficult.

"I think when I won the title in the 1990s, it was a bit

easy but today it is much harder because of the kind of players we have in Africa now. They are all among the best in the world and I must admit that anybody that wins here will know that he worked hard for it," Saleh said.

The Egyptian faces a daunting task in Tunis as he is drawn in Group Two alongside Togo's Dodji Kokou Fanny, South Africa's Shane Overmeyer and Kenya's Brian Mutua.

But Kenyan 21-year-old star, Mutua, also believes that he has been handed a tough challenge.

"I am really in a tough group in this competition but I will surely give it my best and hope that I can qualify from the group and make it to the next stage of the championship. I am here for business because it is a rare privilege for me to represent Kenya in this tournament," Mutua said.



press conference in Tunis yesterday