


Libyan national football assessment and future prospective

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ABSTRACT

Rankings of individual players and teams are an essential component of competition and serve as its foundation. They allow the parties concerned to keep track of their development and set up intriguing pairings. Most significantly, competition scheduling is done using the official standings. In association football, it is typical for a draw to be conducted to establish the game schedule for major tournaments and their qualifying stages. Teams with better rankings are typically partnered with teams with lower rankings. In this approach, rankings have a significant influence on the contest. Less powerful opponents are expected to be faced by the teams at the top of the list. This paper reviews the current status of national Libyan football, identifies the obstacles, and makes recommendations for achieving a better ranking globally.

1. Introduction

Football is considered an important sport in Libya, as it is in many countries around the world. There are several reasons why football is considered important in Libya (Elareibi et al., 2023):

- A source of entertainment and joy: Football is a source of entertainment and joy for many people in Libya, providing a way to relax and enjoy oneself despite the ongoing civil war and the political instability.
- A way to promote social cohesion: Football can bring people together and promote social cohesion, regardless of age, gender, race, or ethnicity in Libya.
- A way to promote national identity: Football is often associated with national identity and pride, particularly when the national team is successful.
- A way to promote physical and mental health: Football requires physical exertion and can help promote physical and mental health for those who practice it.
- A way to create memories: Football is a way to create memories, whether it's watching your team win a championship or playing in a pick-up game with friends.
- A way to distract from the ongoing war: Football can serve as a distraction from the ongoing civil war and political instability in the country, giving people a sense of normalcy and a way to escape the daily struggles they face.
- A way to create a sense of community: Football can bring people together and create a sense of community, particularly in areas that have been affected by the war.
- A way to promote education: Football can also serve as a tool to promote education and life skills development, as well as a way to address social issues such as poverty, crime, and discrimination.






However, as previously mentioned, the ongoing civil war and political instability in the country have had a significant impact on the country's football infrastructure and the ability of the national team to consistently perform at a high level. The lack of stability has made it difficult for the team to play matches, access training facilities, and develop young players.

2. Current status of national Libyan football

The current status of the Libyan national football team is that they have struggled to consistently perform at a high level in recent years. The team has not qualified for a major tournament since the 1982 FIFA World Cup and has not qualified for the Africa Cup of Nations since 2012 (Kosak, 2020). In the FIFA rankings, the Libyan national team has fluctuated in the last few years, as of January 2021 they were positioned at the 96th in the world and 25th in Africa. The team has been affected by the ongoing civil war in the country and the lack of stability and investment in the football infrastructure (Al Jawad & Mansour, 2021). The lack of consistent international fixtures and access to quality training facilities and coaching staff have also contributed to the team's struggles.

There have been some efforts to improve the team's performance in recent years, such as the establishment of the Libyan Football Federation and the creation of a national league, but it will take time for the team to consistently compete at a high level. Table 1 shows that Libya football team ranked 120, while other zone members in North Africa occupied an advanced ranking. It can be noticed a significant difference between Libya and these teams when comparing Libya's position to the rankings of its neighbours. Libya is separated from the nearest teams in terms of arrangement by roughly 80 ranks. It is worth noting that the rankings are only one way of evaluating the relative strength of national teams and are not necessarily a definitive measure of a team's quality. Other factors, such as the quality of a team's players, the tactical ability of its coach, and its recent form, can also be important in determining a team's success. The FIFA World Rankings use a points-based system to rank men's national teams in international football. The ranking points are calculated based on the results of international matches, with more recent matches being more heavily weighted. The points that a team earns for a win, draw, or loss depend on the relative strengths of the teams involved as well as the importance of the match. For example, a win in a friendly match will earn a team fewer points than a win in a World Cup qualifier.

Table 1: FIFA world ranking North African zone (UNAF) – December 2022

No	FIFA Code	Team	FIFA Rank	Points	+/- FIFA
1	MAR	 Morocco	11	1672.35	🟢 +11
2	TUN	 Tunisia	30	1526.20	🟡 0
3	EGY	 Egypt	39	1490.34	🟡 0
4	ALG	 Algeria	40	1486.72	🔴 -3
5	LBY	 Libya	120	1156.74	🟡 0

Source: FIFA

There are several issues facing Libyan football, which have contributed to the struggles of the national team:

1. Civil war and instability: The ongoing civil war in Libya has had a significant impact on the country's football infrastructure and the ability of the national team to consistently perform at a high level (Decrinis, 2019). The lack of stability has made it difficult for the team to play matches, access training facilities, and develop young players.
2. Lack of investment: The football infrastructure in Libya has been impacted by the lack of investment in recent years, with many stadiums and training facilities falling into disrepair. This has made it difficult for the national team to consistently compete at a high level.
3. Lack of international fixtures: The national team has not been able to play as many international matches as other teams due to the civil war, which has impacted their ability to earn points and move up the FIFA ranking.
4. Lack of a consistent league: The national league has been affected by the civil war and the lack of stability in the country, which has made it difficult for the national team to develop young players and for clubs to consistently compete at a high level.
5. Lack of resources: The lack of resources, such as access to good training facilities, coaching staff, and other resources has impacted the development of football in the country.

It's worth mentioning that the situation in Libya is complicated and the country is facing multiple challenges, including political and economic instability, lack of security and the ongoing civil war. These factors have a direct impact on the development of football in the country.

3. Libyan players' performance

It is difficult to provide a comprehensive assessment of the performance of Libyan players as the ongoing civil war and political instability in the country have had a significant impact on the ability of the national team to consistently perform at a high level. However, here are a few points to consider: Lack of international exposure (Al-Khanbashi, 2022): Due to the civil war and lack of stability in the country, Libyan players have not had the opportunity to gain international exposure and experience by playing in top-level leagues and competitions. Also, limited opportunities for development: The lack of investment in football infrastructure in Libya and the ongoing civil war have made it difficult for young players to access training facilities and coaching, limiting their opportunities for development.

In regard to the international fixtures, the national team has not been able to play as many international matches as other teams due to the civil war, which has impacted their ability to earn points and move up the FIFA ranking (Hrhor, 2022). Furthermore, the lack of a consistent league, the national league has been affected by the civil war and the lack of stability in the country, which has made it difficult for the national team to develop young players and for clubs to consistently compete at a high level.

Despite the challenges, there are some talented players in Libya, who had the chance to play abroad and represented the country in some international tournaments. It's important to mention that the situation in Libya is complicated and the country is facing multiple challenges, including political and economic instability, lack of security and the ongoing civil war. These factors have a direct impact on the development of football in the country and on the performance of its players.

4. FIFA ranking

There are several ways to improve a team's position in the FIFA ranking (Cea et al., 2020):

1. Playing more matches: The more matches a team plays, the more opportunities they have to earn points and move up the ranking (Gökgöz & Yalçın, 2021).
2. Winning matches: Winning matches earns a team more points than a draw or a loss.
3. Playing against higher-ranked teams: Beating higher-ranked teams earns a team more points than beating lower-ranked teams.
4. Participating in major tournaments: Participating in tournaments such as the World Cup and the continental championships earns teams more points than friendly matches.
5. Building a strong and consistent squad: Having a squad of talented and consistent players can lead to more victories and therefore more points in the ranking.
6. Develop youth systems and create a pathway for young players to get exposure and international experience.

It is important to note that these are long-term strategies and will not immediately improve a team's position in the ranking. Also, it is worth mentioning that the FIFA ranking system is based on a points system which is recalculated every month, based on the results of the matches that have been played in the past four years.

5. Recommendations

To improve a Libyan football team's position in the FIFA ranking, the following strategies can be considered:

1. Playing more matches: The more matches a team plays, the more opportunities they have to earn points and move up the ranking.
2. Winning matches: Winning matches earns a team more points than a draw or a loss.
3. Playing against higher-ranked teams: Beating higher-ranked teams earns a team more points than beating lower-ranked teams.

4. Participating in regional tournaments: Participating in regional tournaments such as the African Cup of Nations and the Arab Cup of Nations can earn the team more points than friendly matches.
5. Building a strong and consistent squad: Having a squad of talented and consistent players can lead to more victories and therefore more points in the ranking.
6. Developing youth systems: Investing in the development of youth systems in the country and creating a pathway for young players to get exposure and international experience can help in the long-term development of the team.
7. Investing in infrastructure and resources: Having access to good training facilities, coaching staff, and other resources can help improve the team's performance.

It is important to note that these are long-term strategies and will not immediately improve a team's position in the ranking. Also, it's worth mentioning that the FIFA ranking system is based on a points system which is recalculated every month, based on the results of the matches that have been played in the past four years.

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