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Senegal, Nigeria qualify for FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup 2017

TWO teams from Africa will make the long journey to The Bahamas in April to compete in the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup 2017 after qualifying at last week's CAF Beach Soccer Africa Cup of Nations 2016.

Senegal was the first African nation to qualify, beating out Egypt 5-2. Nigeria then eased to a 6-1 win against Morocco taking the second and final spot for the region.

Senegal has participated in five Beach Soccer World Cups to date with quarter-final appearances in 2007 and 2011, representing their best finishes in their tournament history. Nigeria participated in four Beach Soccer World Cups and like Senegal, their best finishes in the tournament's history were quarter-final appearances in 2007 and 2011.

Senegal and Nigeria now join The Bahamas, Tahiti, Italy, Portugal, Poland and Switzerland, who have all secured their spots in next year's tournament.

"We are happy to welcome Senegal and Nigeria and all of their fans to our shores next year. We know that the entire continent of Africa will be tuned in to



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the exciting tournament in The Bahamas next year, and we will not disappoint," said Jeffrey Beckles, chairman of the Local Organising Committee.

"Both countries have had impressive showings in World Cups past and we expect them to bring the same

level of energy and skill to Nassau for the fans to enjoy. The world will be well represented at the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup Bahamas 2017 and we are looking forward to high-level competition," added Anton Sealy, president of the Bahamas Football As-

sociation.

Sixteen teams will face off on the white sands of Nassau, Bahamas April 27 to May 7 at a brand new state-of-the-art facility.

Beach soccer fans eagerly await the results of the upcoming tournaments for Asia, South America and

the North, Central America and Caribbean regions.

The Confederation of North, Central America and Caribbean Association Football (CONCACAF) will host its regional World Cup qualifiers in Nassau at the new beach soccer stadium on February 20-26,

2017. The CONCACAF Beach Soccer Championship will see 16 teams from those regions compete for only two spots in next year's Beach Soccer World Cup.

The CONCACAF qualifier also serves as the official test event for next year's main event.

BEACH SOCCER TEAM CELEBRATES CHRISTMAS AT DOWN SYNDROME CENTRE

THE Bahamas national beach soccer team took some time away from its busy training schedule to celebrate Christmas with more than 40 students with down syndrome and other developmental challenges and disabilities last week.

Clad in Bahamas jerseys, elf hats and reindeer antlers, the beach soccer players arrived at the Down Syndrome Centre on Village Road with high energy and gifts for each of the students.

After exchanging several high

fives and hugs, the students were ready to learn some beach soccer skills. They were taught tricks and tips from some of The Bahamas' top beach soccer stars.

"It was an honour for us to spend time with these amazing kids and adults. We wanted to not only have some fun with them this holiday season, but also show to them that there are no limits to what they can do or achieve. They all had smiles on their faces and really enjoyed playing soccer with us. Honestly, I think we

learned more from them than they learned from us," said Gavin Christie, captain of the Bahamas beach soccer team.

The Bahamas Down Syndrome and Friends Centre is a learning facility for children and adults with down syndrome and other disabilities.

The centre currently facilitates 44 adults and children.

"We want to say thanks to the beach soccer team for being a part of our Christmas celebration. We are so grateful to them and

to the entire community for seeing how special our kids are and that they do have a purpose and are valued," said Cheryl Newell, president of the Bahamas Down Syndrome Association.

The Bahamas Football Association and the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup 2017 Local Organising Committee partnered with the Bahamas Down Syndrome Association to plan the Christmas party.

The students were treated to a fun day of soccer, games, bounce-

ing castle, pizza, cake and gifts.

Each student received a Bahamas soccer jersey. The team also donated several soccer balls to the centre for its Saturday soccer programme.

All of the students, their teachers and their families will attend the upcoming FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup Bahamas 2017 as special guests of the Bahamas national beach soccer team.

The event is scheduled for April 27 to May 7 next year.



DOWN Syndrome Centre students enjoy the Christmas party with national beach soccer team members.