

# King of African Soccer Crowned

Contributed by Danusa Ocholi  
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Emmanuel Adebayor, Togo's leading striker is Africa's Footballer of the Year

Emmanuel Sheyi Adebayor, Arsenal and Togo's striker, was crowned the new king of the continent's soccer when he emerged the 2008 African Footballer of the Year last Tuesday night in Lagos. The player made history by becoming the first player from Togo to win the CAF award regarded as one of the most prized honours in world football. The prestigious award sponsored by globacom had been dominated by players from Cameroon, Nigeria, Ghana and Morocco. While players from Cameroon have won this award instituted 33 years ago a record 10 times, players from Nigeria including Nwankwo Kanu and Rashidi Yekini have won it five times, the same number with Ghana. This time, the Togolese beat his closest rivals, Mohamed Aboutreika of Al-Ahly of Egypt; and Michael Essien of Ghana to win the title. The award was decided by a poll of African national team coaches, who scored Adebayor with 74 points to Aboutreika's 53. Adebayor's 24 goals in the English Premier League last season gave him the edge over the other contenders as well as his four goals in three games for Togo, his country, in their World Cup qualifying matches. Dressed in agbada, a Nigerian local wear, Adebayor walked to the dais to receive the award from CAF President, Issa Hayatou, who was ably supported by Sepp Blatter, FIFA President, amidst cheers from the crowded hall. He said shortly after receiving the award, "I dedicate this award to my mother, who has supported me all my life. Unfortunately, my father is not around, (dead), but I believe wherever he is, he must be proud of his son." The award is already spurring Adebayor to achieve more in his chosen field as he said that he will work hard to win the world cup which will be held in Africa. Adebayor will receive 20, 000 US Dollars for the historic feat. On a personal level, the award was a befitting birthday present for the player who clocks 25 on February 26. The coronation of Adebayor was the climax of the ceremony dominated by Egyptian winners with five honours. Six-times Africa club champions, Al-Ahly won honours in three categories with Aboutreika midfielder dynamo leading the pack with the Inter-Clubs player of the Year. Al-Ahly was also voted the best club as well as its fans, the Supporters Club of the Year (Club division). The Pharaohs, the Egyptian national team, claimed the National team of the Year while its tactician, Hassan Shehata, picked the Coach of the Year prize. Salomon Kalou of Côte d'Ivoire won the Young Player of the Year award and the national team, the Fair Play honour, while South Africa's Alice Mattlou won the Women's Footballer of the Year award. Nigeria took consolation in the Best Supporters Club in the national team category and its Christian Chukwu winning the Legend Player of the year award. Two of the country's players, Taye Taiwo and Joseph Yobo were listed among Africa's Best Eleven for 2008. Roger Ouegnin, Asec Mimosas president, was presented with the Merit Order of Achievement for his contribution to the development of youth football on the continent. Farah Addo, former CAF executive committee member from Somalia and Oyo Orok Oyo Etubom, of Nigeria, both of whom died last year, also received the Merit Order of Achievement award. Nigeria President, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, was also presented with the Platinum Award.

Roll call of award winners  
 Player of the Year Emmanuel Adebayor (Arsenal and Togo)  
 Inter-Club Player of the Year Mohamed Aboutreika (Al-Ahly and Egypt)  
 National Team of the Year Egypt  
 Club of the Year Al-Ahly (Egypt)  
 Young Player of the Year Salomon Kalou (Chelsea and Côte d'Ivoire)  
 Women's footballer of the year Alice Mattlou (South Africa)  
 Coach of the Year Hassan Shehata (Egypt national team)  
 Order of Merit Achievement Roger Ouegnin, President of ASEC Mimosas Football Club  
 Farah Addo Orok Oyo  
 Fair Play Award Côte d'Ivoire  
 Best Supporters Club (Club division) Al-Ahly (Egypt)  
 Best Supporters Club (National teams division) Nigeria Supporters Club  
 African Football Legend Christian Chukwu (Nigeria)  
 Platinum Award Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, President of the Republic of Nigeria  
 CAF Best XI  
 Goalkeeper &ndash; Carlos Idriss Kameni (Espanyol and Cameroon)  
 Defenders &ndash; Wael Gomaa (Al-Ahly and Egypt), Ismail Taye Taiwo (Olympique Marseille and Nigeria), Joseph Yobo (Everton and Nigeria), John Mensah (Olympique Lyon and Ghana)  
 Midfielders &ndash; Mohamed Aboutreika (Al-Ahly and Egypt), Michael Essien (Chelsea and Ghana), Yaya Toure (Barcelona and Cote d'Ivoire), Sulley Muntari (Inter Milan and Ghana)  
 Attackers &ndash; Samuel Eto'o (Barcelona and Spain), Emmanuel Adebayor (Arsenal and Togo)