

Pure perfection

South Sudan's basketball team sails through first qualifying round for 2023 World Cup with six wins from six

South Sudan has completed a spectacular run of wins to advance undefeated from the first round of Africa qualifiers for the 2023 Basketball World Cup.

The six straight victories included a [second win in five months against reigning African champions Tunisia](#) in a qualification campaign that began on 25 February with a win over Rwanda in Dakar.

The Bright Stars, ranked 76 in the world, racked up wins against Rwanda, Cameroon and world number 26 Tunisia in consecutive days in early July to progress to the second round of qualifiers for next year's World Cup, organised by the [International Basketball Federation \(FIBA\)](#).

"The team performed in a heroic way," said the South Sudan Basketball Federation (SSBF) deputy secretary general, Arou Chan, appointed on 6 July. "Our aim as a group is to make it all the way to the World Cup. And we believe with determination, hard work, organization, discipline, and consistency we will make it."

Chan credited Luol Deng, SSBF president and a two-time [NBA All-Star](#), with his "vision of getting us to the World Cup. He put together a team of excellent professional coaching staff, as well as surrounded himself with individuals that had a common goal. They scouted young players around the globe that were talented, have South Sudan at heart, and were eager to represent the nation."

South Sudan's [75-61 vanquishing of Tunisia on 2 July](#) was the team's second win over Les Aigles de Carthage this year, following a [72-64 victory in February](#) that brought an end to an undefeated run for the North African team that dated back to 2018. The double triumph was all the sweeter after Tunisia knocked South Sudan out of FIBA's regional African tournament, Afrobasket, in the 2021 [quarter-finals](#).

The team's success has been built on some stellar individual performances. After the first qualifying round, the Bright Star's Nuni Omot is the top points scorer in the regional competition with 94, and lies fourth in the points per game (PPG) rankings, at 15.7.

His teammate Bul Kuol has the sixth-highest PPG in the competition, at 13.7, and shares the lead for 3-pointers per game with Guinea's Shannon Evans. Fellow Bright Star [Kuany Ngor Kuany](#) ranks eighth for total points scored, with 73, and lies second for 3-point shooting accuracy.

The top three teams from the four round-one groups now form two groups of six, competing for five African places at next year's World Cup, to be held in Japan, Indonesia and the Philippines from 25 August to 10 September 2023.

The teams carry forward their points from the first round of qualifying, putting South Sudan [top of their group](#) ahead of Egypt, Tunisia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Senegal and Cameroon.

The team's next qualifying fixture is against Senegal on 26 August, followed by the Democratic Republic of the Congo the next day, and Egypt on 28 August.

Richard Nield is a freelance journalist and filmmaker who has covered South Sudan since its creation in 2011. He has been published and broadcast by the BBC, Al Jazeera, the FT, The Economist, Foreign Policy, Reuters, CNN, CNBC, ITN and Channel 4. Since 2012 he has been working on [Lions & Tigers](#), a feature-length documentary telling the inspirational story of South Sudan's national wheelchair basketball team. To support this project, please visit www.lionsandtigersfilm.com/support