

# Nigeria's Davis Cup dream smashed

## •Benin, Togo qualify for Group 3

**N**IGERIA's dream of advancing into the Euro/Africa Group 3 of the Davis Cup was yesterday smashed as the country's team led by Jonathan Igbinoia, Abdulmumuni Babalola and Toyin Dairo crashed to the superior power of Benin Republic's Christophe Pogon and Armand Segodo in the final match of the competition.

Nigeria lost 2-1 on aggregate to Benin after US based Jonathan Igbinoia raised the country's hope of playing in the European Zone beating Benin Republic number one player Pogon in two

straight sets of 6-3, 7-6.

Abdulmumuni Babalola inferior standard to Benin Republic Armand Segodo losing 6-3, 6-2 put Nigeria on a very tight rope. Segodo outstroked Babalola without much stress. This brought the score line to 1-1, setting the stage for a crack doubles match whose winner would emerge the qualifier for the Euro/Africa Zone 3.

The pair of Jonathan Igbinoia and Toyin Dairo could not stop the rampaging duo of Pogon and Segodo. After Nigeria won

**By Dapo Sotuminu**

the first set at 6-3, the team could not get their rhythm together again, as the Beninoise constantly attacked the weaker Dairo to get their desired result.

Dairo was only good in service, but was below average in rallying, a weakness Benin Republic exploited. Benin won the second set at 7-6, and went ahead to wrap up the match 7-5 in the third set, to win the doubles event at 2-1.

Igbinoia wept profusely,

after the lose, and was consoled by the Sports Minister, Steven Akiga and the President of the Nigeria Tennis Federation, Engineer Sani Ndanusa.

The Minister who presented the champions plaques to Benin Republic and Togo who qualified from Group B and A respectively, commended the Nigerian team for playing well in the finals, noting that, only one team has to win and Benin Republic won.

Akiga commended the

NTF President, Sani Ndanusa for facilitating Nigeria's excellent hosting of the Davis Cup competition.

"I want to assure that, the NTF will get all necessary assistance from the Sports Ministry to further develop the game.

"I do not want the NTF to feel discouraged by the loss, but feel that tennis is getting back to Nigeria, to West Africa and Africa as a whole. We must strife hard to take tennis to the level of the Europeans," the minister said.



*The Nigerian Davis Cup bench in an estatic moment that turned sour after Benin Republic deflated Nigeria to qualify.*



*Nigeria's doubles team of Dairo and Jonathan Igbinoia*