

APR FC is set to clash with guest team Red Arrows FC in the highly anticipated semi-final of the Council for East and Central Africa Football Associations (CECAFA) Dar Port Kagame Cup 2024. The final match will take place on Sunday at the KMC Stadium in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

In a nail-biting semi-final on Friday at the KMC Stadium, Coach Darko Novic's APR FC triumphed over Al Hilal with a 5-4 victory in penalty shootouts. Meanwhile, the Zambian side, Red Arrows FC, secured their place in the final by scoring late goals in the second half of extra time through substitute Paul Katema and Allassane Diara, defeating Sudan's Hay Al Wadi FC 2-0 in the match held at the Azam Complex, Chamazi.

APR FC, three-time winners of the regional cup, have maintained an unbeaten record leading up to the final. Conversely, Red Arrows FC, reigning champions of the Zambia Premier League, experienced a significant 5-0 defeat against Al Hilal in a group stage match just days prior.

Coach Novic expressed immense pride in his players, praising their unwavering fighting spirit. "We still have a lot of work to do because preparing for a final is very different, especially after playing 120 minutes in the semi-final," he remarked to Cecafoonline.

Al Hilal's coach, Florent Ibenge, reflected on their narrow loss, noting, "Football is about taking your chances and penalties can go to any team. But we are happy that we have played all these matches in the CECAFA Kagame Cup because it is preparing us for the new season." Al Hilal will now compete against fellow Sudanese side Hay Al Wadi in the play-off on Sunday before the final.

Allassane Diarra, who scored Red Arrows' second goal and earned the Man of the Match award, emphasized the team's resilience. "This was not an easy match, but we played our hearts out and made it to the final," he said.

The regional tournament enjoys sponsorship from the Sudan Football Association (SFA), Dar Port through the Tanzania Ports Authority, Azam TV, and Rwandan President Paul Kagame. The champions will receive a prize of US\$30,000, the runner-up US\$20,000, and the third-place team US\$10,000.

With high stakes and fierce competition, the final promises to be an exciting culmination of the CECAFA Dar Port Kagame Cup 2024.