Alves faces trial for alleged sexual assault

Date: 2023-11-15

Source: https://thenationonlineng.net/alves-faces-trial-for-alleged-sexual-assault/

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Ex-Brazil and Barcelona defender Dani Alves is to stand trial in Spain for alleged sexual assault.  
  
Alves, 40, has been in prison without bail since January after being arrested over an allegation he assaulted a woman in a Barcelona nightclub in December.  
  
He denied the claims and said he had consensual sex with his accuser.  
  
A Barcelona court has now ruled there are sufficient grounds for him to stand trial following requests by the public prosecutor and the woman’s lawyer.  
  
“The statements of the alleged victim and the witnesses’ statements and experts’ reports that appear in the case must be considered as sufficient for this purpose, without prejudice to the final outcome following the plenary phase,” the court said in a statement.  
  
A date has not yet been set for the proceedings.  
  
Alves was formally indicted by a Spanish judge in August.  
  
In Spain, a claim of rape is investigated under the general accusation of sexual assault and convictions can lead to prison sentences of four to 15 years.  
  
Alves played 408 times for Barcelona, winning six league titles and three Champions Leagues across two spells, and was also part of Brazil’s 2022 World Cup squad.  
  
His most recent club, Mexican side Pumas UNAM, terminated the Brazilian’s contract with immediate effect in January.  
  
2026 World Cup Race: Super Eagles eye winning start against Crocodiles  
  
2022 FIFA World Cup notable absentees Nigeria have committed to putting their best foot forward and ensuring a solid start to the 2026 finals that will be hosted by USA, Mexico and Canada, even as the Super Eagles senior boys insist they will not be under-rating any of the opponents on their route.  
  
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The Eagles will be locked in a tango with the Crocodiles of Lesotho in their first match of the 10-match series that stretches over the next 47 months, but team leader Kenneth Omeruo said yesterday that the three-time African champions have held a meeting where it was decided to take the long campaign one-match-at-a-time.  
  
“Most of us in the team still remember how painful it was not to be part of the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. The memory lingers but then, that is gone. This is a fresh opportunity and we all want to be at the next one.  
  
“There is always the temptation to over-think how to process the campaign, but it is a long one and we have opted to think and plan for only the match ahead of us. On Thursday, we will play Lesotho. We remember them from our 2021 AFCON qualifiers. After the final whistle on Thursday, we can then start thinking about the next opponents.”  
  
Nigeria trade tackles with Lesotho at the Godswill Akpabio Stadium, Uyo tomorrow from 5pm, with three points at stake, and then fly to Butare in Rwanda to take on the Warriors of Zimbabwe in a Day 2 encounter on Sunday.  
  
In their 2021 AFCON fixture, the Eagles won 4-2 in Maseru with hefty contributions from Victor Osimhen, who got two goals and assisted two. In the return match at the Teslim Balogun Stadium, Lagos in March 2021, Osimhen scored one and assisted one in the 3-0 defeat of the visitors that ensured the Eagles finished the qualification series unbeaten.  
  
However, the Napoli SC of Italy striker will be missing when both teams take to the natural turf of the Godswill Akpabio Stadium on Thursday evening. He is currently injured.  
  
“We have a number of players missing due to injury or some other circumstance; we have to deal with that. Those of us who are available must step up to the plate and do the job,” Omeruo added. Winger Samuel Chukwueze, who got a goal against the Crocodiles in that first clash in Maseru, is also out injured.  
  
All 23 invited players have arrived at the Super Eagles’ Four Point By Sheraton Hotel in Uyo, and all trained at the training pitch of the Godswill Akpabio Stadium.  
  
The Eagles and the Crocodiles (who landed in Uyo on Tuesday morning after flying from Lagos) will take turns to have official training at the match venue on Wednesday evening.  
  
In the six-team Group C, the Eagles will host South Africa’s Bafana Bafana and then play away to Benin Republic in June 2024, before a run of six matches between March and October 2025 that will determine the winner, and the team eligible from the pool to fly Africa’s flag in USA, Canada and Mexico in the summer of 2026.