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SABOBO AND LEVISON NAMED IN BEST XI

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MWEEMBA PROMISES RESOLUTION IN SAKALA-GRANT DISPUTE, EYES AFCON, WAFCON GLORY

By Joseph Tembo



Newly elected Football Association of Zambia (FAZ) president Keith Mweemba says a solution will be found to the ongoing conflict between Chipolopolo striker Fashion Sakala Junior and head coach Avram Grant.

Speaking at a press briefing at Football House, Mweemba, the former FC MUZA president, emphasized the importance of engaging Grant directly before making any pronouncements on the matter.

“A solution will be found and we will all be happy,” Mweemba said. “I can’t make any pronouncements without meeting the coach... that would be bad leadership.”

The conflict between Sakala and Grant has drawn public attention in recent weeks, with the striker reportedly refusing call-ups due to alleged mistreatment and communication issues with the coach. Mweemba stressed that understanding the root cause of the issue is key to restoring unity within

the squad.

The 45-year-old FAZ boss also outlined his broader vision for Zambian football, expressing confidence that both the men’s and women’s national teams can clinch continental glory this year if properly supported.

“If we play our cards right, we can actually win both the AfCON and WAFCON,” Mweemba said. “I believe in meticulous preparation. We must engage our coaches and support them fully in their plans.”

Chipolopolo will feature in Group A of the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations (AfCON) in Morocco, facing the hosts, Mali, and Comoros. The Copper Queens, meanwhile, will compete in the Women’s Africa Cup of Nations (WAFCON), also in Morocco, alongside Morocco, Senegal, and the Democratic Republic of Congo in their group.

Despite his optimism for AFCON and WAFCON, Mweemba struck a realistic tone regarding Zambia’s

chances of qualifying for the men’s 2026 FIFA World Cup.

“I don’t want to be over-ambitious. For this cycle, we may not be in a good position, but for the next qualifiers, we must qualify without fail.”

On the domestic front, Mweemba assured FAZ staff that their jobs were secure under the new administration. He said improving working conditions, particularly in areas like transport, housing, and salary structures, was a top priority.

“No one is losing their job,” Mweemba said. “We are looking at ways to improve the conditions of service to ensure Football House has a motivated workforce.”

Mweemba is expected to meet both Grant and Copper Queens coach Nora Hauptle in the coming days as he begins his term focused on unity, preparation, and performance across all levels of Zambian football.

coming from home and doing sports as a woman.” She also thanked her parents and siblings for their “endless support.”

However, the most poignant part of her speech came when she paid tribute to her late son, Josh. Holding back tears, she expressed, “I wish I could be able to coach you so that you become a better player, but God knows that you’re playing football in heaven.”

Kanyemba also reflected on her team’s recent achievements, particularly qualifying for the Women’s World Cup after a ten-year absence, a feat she credited entirely to the commitment of her players.

“Getting this award is a testament to the hard work we put in. It has come as an encouragement even to the new crop of players that if they work hard, they too can bring this team to glory,” she said.

The Coach of the Year award not only celebrates her strategic brilliance and leadership but also highlights the strides being made in Zambian women’s football under her guidance.

With her team’s recent success and her own recognition on the national stage, Kanyemba remains an inspiring figure in Zambian sports, paving the way for more women to lead and excel in the world of football.

PRESIDENT’S CELEBRATES SPORTING FOLOKO

By Lucky Chama



The 2024 Zambian Annual Sports Awards reached a high point with the presentation of the prestigious President’s Award. Alfred Foloko, President of the National Olympic Committee of Zambia (NOCZ), accepted the award on behalf of the nation’s sporting community.

In a letter to President Hakainde Hichilema, Foloko expressed his deep gratitude. He emphasized that the award recognized the collective efforts of Zambian athletes, coaches, administrators, and volunteers.

“It is with great humility that I accept this honour and recognition,” Foloko wrote, “one which I do not receive in my personal capacity alone, but in honour of the many Zambian athletes...who work tirelessly every single day to uplift the name of our nation through sport.”

Foloko praised the dedication of Zambian athletes, past and present,

stating, “Their spirit inspires us, and their sacrifices fuel our drive to create better systems, stronger institutions, and greater opportunities in Zambian sport.”

The NOCZ President also acknowledged the government’s support for the sports sector since 2021. He highlighted improvements in infrastructure, athlete support, policies, and international cooperation.

“We are witnessing a revitalised sporting spirit both at grassroots and elite levels,” Foloko noted, expressing confidence in Zambia’s growing position in global sports.

Foloko reaffirmed his commitment to working with all stakeholders to further develop Zambian sport. He concluded his letter by thanking the President for the honor and his support of the sporting community.

KANYEMBA DEDICATES COACH OF THE YEAR AWARD

By Joseph Tembo



Kanyemba, the celebrated head coach of Zambia’s national women’s football team, has dedicated her Coach of the Year (Female) award to her family, technical team, and players after a heartfelt acceptance speech at the 2025 National Sports Awards Gala held last night.

Beaming with gratitude and emotion, Kanyemba opened her remarks by giving “glory, honor, and adoration” to God for her recognition during the 2024 season. She described the journey as a challenging but rewarding one, marked by teamwork, resilience, and sacrifice.

“I want to say thank you very much for being chosen as the Coach of the Year. It has been good all along, and I really give thanks to Him,” she said.

She was quick to acknowledge the collective effort behind her success, paying tribute to her technical bench and the players who played under her leadership. “Without their input and their efforts, it wouldn’t be possible for me to win,” she noted.

In an emotional moment, Kanyemba dedicated the award to her husband for his unwavering support, saying, “It’s not easy

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ZAMBIA'S SABOBO AND LEVISON NAMED IN GROUP STAGE BEST XI AS TEAM EXITS U-20 AFCON WITH PRIDE

By Joseph Tembo



While Zambia may not have made it to the quarter-finals of the TotalEnergies CAF U-20 Africa Cup of Nations Egypt 2025, the team leaves the tournament with pride and individual accolades that underscore its bright future.

Zambia’s campaign in the group stage was marked by moments of brilliance, none brighter than the performances of midfield maestro Joseph 'Sabobo' Banda and shot-stopper Levison Banda, who both left a lasting impression on the continent.

Sabobo, already hailed as one of Zambia’s most exciting young prospects, cemented his rising star status by winning two Man of the Match awards, one of only two players across all teams to achieve this during the group stage. His dynamic play, vision, and creativity caught the attention of fans and the CAF Technical Study Group, earning him a spot in the official Group Stage Best XI.

Joining him in that elite lineup was goalkeeper Levison Banda, whose standout performances earned him

the title of Best Goalkeeper of the Group Stage. His crucial saves and composure under pressure were instrumental in keeping Zambia competitive in a tightly contested group.

Though Zambia missed out on a place in the last eight, with Nigeria, Senegal, Morocco, EgyptThe official Team of the Group Stage was announced in a balanced 4-2-3-1 formation, featuring top talents from across the continent. Zambia’s representation, with Sabobo anchoring the attacking midfield and Levison between the posts, highlights the country’s continued contribution to African football excellence.

, Ghana, Sierra Leone, DR Congo, and South Africa advancing, the team’s spirited performances and individual recognitions provide a foundation to build on for future competitions.

As the knockout phase kicks off, Zambia will watch from the sidelines, but with heads held high, knowing their young stars stood toe-to-toe with Africa’s best. With talents like Sabobo and Levison leading the next generation, Zambian football fans have every reason to be optimistic.

MALUNGA CHAMPIONS NATIONAL TITLES: "THEY ELEVATE OUR BOXERS AND THE SPORT"

By Lucky Chama



Oriental Quarries Boxing Promotions (OQBP) manager Christopher Malunga has made a passionate plea to fellow Zambian boxing promoters, urging them to place greater emphasis and relevance on national championships.

Speaking at a press briefing ahead of the highly anticipated World Boxing Council (WBC) international bantamweight title fight between Zambia's David Mwale and Ghana's Micheal Decardi Nelson, Malunga articulated his vision for a stronger domestic boxing scene.

Malunga firmly believes that a renewed focus on promoting and elevating national championships will provide Zambian boxers with crucial opportunities for growth and recognition. He argued that by actively participating in and winning national titles, local fighters will be

better positioned to gain the necessary recognition and ranking points to compete for more prestigious continental and global accolades.

"It's very, very important to promote Zambian some of the titles which have been promoted, they cannot compare even to Zambian titles," Malunga stated.

Furthermore, Malunga highlighted the strategic advantage that national titles offer in terms of international recognition. "It's good also when a boxer fights for a Zambian title because even on the rating, it shows national championship," he explained.

"Provided you are active, they can pick you straight to a big fight. So don't be surprised when we start promoting those titles."

Malunga also pointed out the positive impact that a thriving national championship circuit would positively impact Zambia's Boxing Control Board. He suggested a collaborative approach where a portion of the revenue generated from national title fights could be channeled towards the board, providing them with much-needed resources to further develop and regulate the sport within the country.

"So it's very important that the board we sit down with the board as stakeholders, a new belt is created uh by the board, a certain amount goes towards that so that the board also can generate income, then we concentrate because I see a lot of our boxers here who need to fight for Zambian title because if you're a national champion, you can even be considered for one of the biggest, even WBC," Malunga elaborated.

Malunga's call comes at a significant time for Zambian boxing, with the upcoming WBC title fight evoking memories of a golden era, marking 35 years since Lottie Mwale's memorable victory over Ghana's Ray Acquaye in Lusaka. This historical context underscores the potential for Zambia to once again become a prominent force in African boxing.

With nine supporting bouts also scheduled for the May 25th event, featuring local talent, Malunga's message serves as a timely reminder of the importance of nurturing and showcasing Zambian boxers on their home soil through meaningful and respected national championships.

BENJAMIN BUSH RESIGNS AS PRESIDENT OF MMA ZAMBIA AFTER TRANSFORMATIVE TENURE

By Joseph Tembo



Benjamin Bush, the founding President of MMA Zambia, has officially announced his resignation from the position, marking the end of a historic chapter for mixed martial arts in the country.

In a heartfelt statement, Bush reflected on his eight-year journey since returning to Zambia, the country of his birth, and the profound growth of MMA from a non-existent sport into a nationally recognized and internationally competitive discipline.

“When I arrived back in Zambia eight years ago, Mixed Martial Arts didn’t exist here—not in any formal or structured sense,” Bush stated. “What started as a small social project, Ulemu Fight Academy, became ground zero for MMA in Zambia.”

“I’m incredibly proud of how far we’ve come,” Bush said. “MMA Zambia has built platforms for athlete exposure, domestic competition, national team selection, and international representation.”

He also used his statement to highlight the need for deeper collaboration between sports federations and government agencies. Calling for more transparent, merit-based funding and planning, Bush urged the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Arts and the National Sports Council to work closely with federations to achieve shared goals.

Bush’s resignation comes on the heels of Zambia’s stunning performance at the 2025 Africa Championships in Luanda, Angola. Despite sending only six athletes, the national team secured five medals—including gold, two silver, and two bronze.

A standout was Miracle Chipito, who clinched gold in dominant fashion and has now emerged as a continental superstar. Alongside her, fellow pioneer Mutinta Mweene continues to inspire the growth of women’s MMA in Zambia.

As Bush steps down, he leaves behind a legacy of vision, sacrifice, and grassroots impact that has propelled MMA Zambia from obscurity to international acclaim. No official announcement has been made yet on Bush’s successor.

CAN ANCELOTTI FIX BRAZIL AND END WORLD CUP HOODOO?

BBC



Carlo Ancelotti has agreed to take over as head coach of the Brazil national team.

It is one of the most eye-catching appointments in international football history.

For a team so deeply tied to the nation's 'beautiful game' identity, the decision to bring in a foreign coach - one of Europe's elite - signals a desperation to win and an ambition for the struggling Selecao to turn a corner.

"Ancelotti was the main choice because he has an unrivalled tradition of success, winning in five countries," said South American football expert Tim Vickery.

So, with the 2026 World Cup around the corner, can Ancelotti fix Brazil? Brazil's footballing dominance has fallen away in the last two decades.

Despite lifting two Copa America titles in that time, in 2007 and 2019, their record at the World Cup - the ultimate measure of success - has been disappointing.

They have not won the tournament since triumphing for the fifth time in 2002, and their recent exits have been painful signals of decline.

The most dismal came in 2014, when Brazil, hosting the World Cup, were humiliated 7-1 by Germany in the semi-finals.

Belgium got the better of Brazil in a 2018 quarter-final, while 2022 trophy hopes were dashed by defeat to Croatia on penalties in the last eight.

"Every campaign since 2002 has ended as soon as the side has come up against a European team in the knockout stages," said Vickery.

"It's become a hoodoo they want to overcome and another reason they've gone with a European coach this time round. They're saying 'if we want to beat them next time round, we need someone who knows them'."

Brazil's current World Cup qualifying campaign has been alarming.

They should qualify comfortably enough, but a dire run, including a humiliating 4-1 defeat to Argentina, has caused a scramble for answers.

Managers have come and gone in recent years amid the clamour for a winning team.

Tite, respected for bringing a sense of order and pride, stepped down as planned after Qatar 2022. The team's most recent coach, Dorival Junior, was sacked following the Argentina collapse.

This has led the Brazilian Football Confederation to deploy a bold plan, one that has been long in their thoughts: Project Ancelotti.

It will officially begin on 26 May, as the 65-year-old Italian ends his stint in Madrid, where Xabi Alonso is expected to be his successor.

Vickery said: "We were hearing last year that the senior players weren't sold on Dorival Junior, but there will be none of that with Carlo Ancelotti. "He has instant credibility in the dressing room."

CELTICS ON BRINK OF EXIT AS BRUNSON SHINES FOR KNICKS

BBC



Jalen Brunson scored 39 points as the New York Knicks beat the Boston Celtics 121-113 to leave the reigning NBA champions on the brink of elimination from the play-offs.

The Knicks stormed back from 14 points down in the third quarter to go 3-1 up in the best-of-seven Eastern Conference semi-final and are in sight of the finals for the first time since 2000.

The Celtics also lost forward Jayson Tatum, who scored 42 points before being carried off in the fourth quarter with what coach Joe Mazzulla described as a "lower body injury".

The six-time All Star, who was later seen being taken to the Madison Square Garden locker room in a wheelchair, will have a scan on Tuesday to assess the damage.

"He'll get the MRI and we'll see what it is," said Mazzulla.

"Obviously you're always concerned about someone's health. It's two-fold, we're concerned about his health and where's he's at. And then we're concerned what we've got to do better in game five."

The Knicks can clinch the series with a win in Boston on Thursday (00:00 BST).

Boston, who won game three on Saturday, started strongly with Tatum and Payton Pritchard leading the charge.

A Derrick White three-pointer gave the Celtics their biggest lead of the night early in the third quarter (72-58) but from then on the Knicks took over, taking an 88-85 lead into the final quarter.

Brunson controlled matters and

when OG Anunoby grabbed a steal off Tatum in the incident that left the Celtics star writhing in pain before making a dunk, the Knicks were 118-106 ahead.

"I was just in a flow and doing whatever. I wasn't really trying to take over. It was just 'whatever we've gotta do'," Brunson said.

"We didn't quit, kept fighting. And that's what's most important. Whenever you get in a hole you can't quit."

The Minnesota Timberwolves went 3-1 up in their Western Conference semi-final series against Golden State Warriors thanks to a 117-110 win on the road.

Anthony Edwards finished with a 30-point tally in the win over the Warriors, who are missing injured star player Stephen Curry.

The Timberwolves hit 17 unanswered points in the the third quarter which helped them build an 85-68 advantage which they never looked like losing.

A win on their home court in game five on Thursday (02:30 BST) will see them advance to the finals.

Edwards revealed a half-time dressing down by Minnesota coach Chris Finch had sparked the second-half revival.

"We came out like we had won the series already, and when we went in at half-time coach said we were playing like losers," he said.

"He told me I wasn't defending at a high level, and needed to do better offensively, so in the second half I tried to do that."

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