

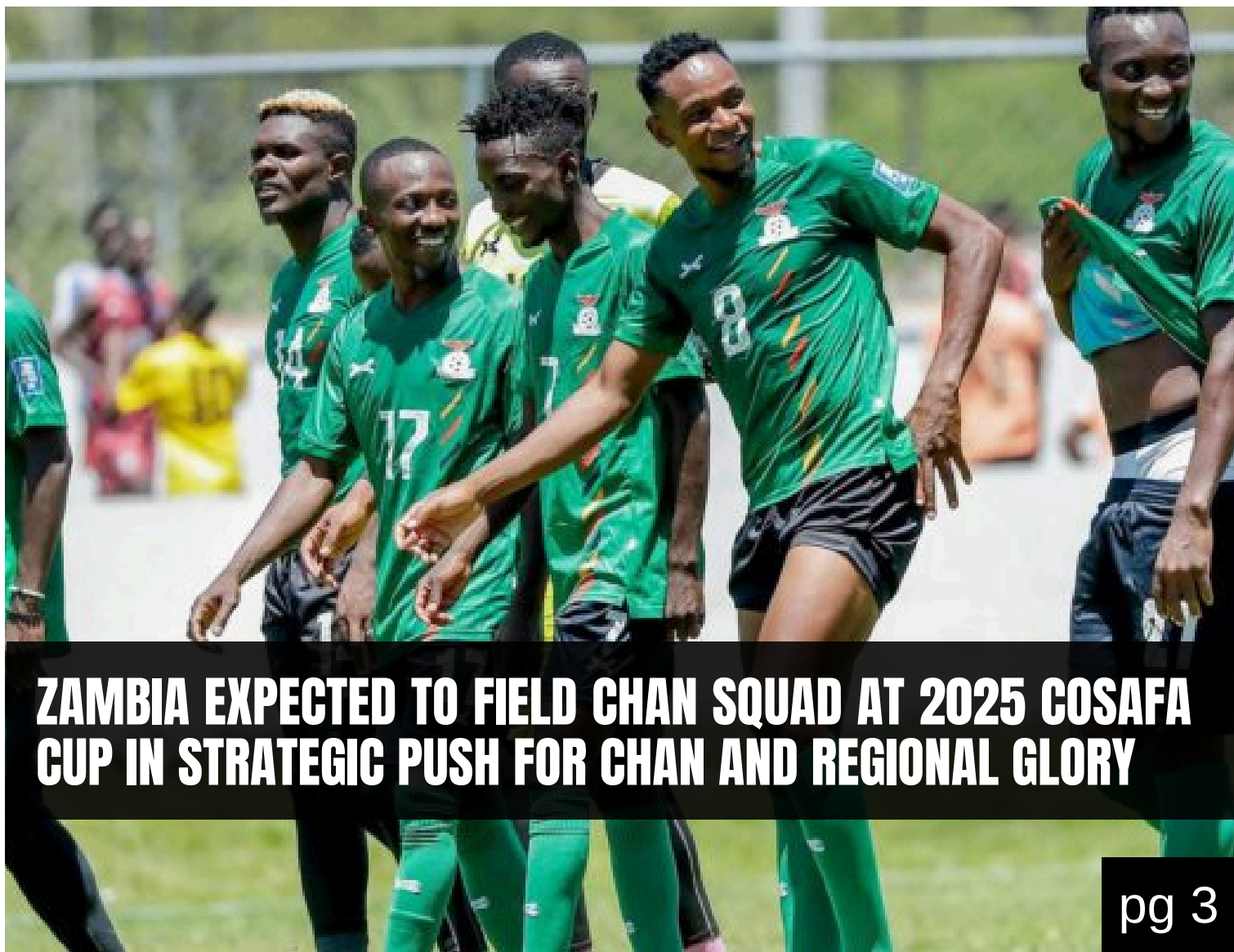


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# ZAMBIA DRAWN IN GROUP D FOR 2025 COSAFA CUP

Zambia has been drawn into Group D of the 2025 HOLLYWOODBETS COSAFA Cup alongside Comoros and Botswana, in what promises to be a fiercely contested group at the regional showpiece set for ... pg 3



# ZAMBIAN INTERNATIONAL FRANKIE MUSONDA TO DEPART AYR UNITED AT SEASON’S END

By Joseph Tembo



Ayr United have confirmed that Zambian international defender Frankie Musonda will leave the club when his contract expires at the end of the current season, bringing a three-year spell at Somerset Park to a close.

The 27-year-old centre-back, who joined the Scottish Championship side from Raith Rovers in June 2022, is set to become a free agent and is expected to explore new opportunities during the upcoming June transfer window. His departure was confirmed by the club via their

official website, alongside that of goalkeeper Robbie Mutch and forward Max Guthrie.

Musonda made 71 appearances for Ayr United, more than at any other club in his career, scoring five goals and providing three assists. Known for his composure and strength at the back, he quickly became a fan favourite and played a key role in the club’s push for promotion, which ultimately fell short this season.

The 2023/24 campaign proved challenging for the Brentford-born

defender. He was limited to just 16 appearances, including 11 starts, due to recurring injuries. Despite the setbacks, his performances when fit demonstrated his quality and leadership on the pitch.

Musonda, who has also represented Zambia at the international level, is likely to attract interest from clubs seeking a reliable and experienced central defender as the transfer window approaches.

# CHIBWE EYES CHIPOLOPOLO RETURN AFTER STELLAR SEASON IN SOUTH AFRICA

By Joseph Tembo



After a standout campaign with South Africa’s Black Leopards, goalkeeper Cyril Mwenya Chibwe has declared his readiness to answer the call of the Zambian national team should the opportunity arise.

The 31-year-old shot-stopper, who kept nine clean sheets in 18 appearances for the Limpopo-based club in the National First Division (NFD), played a crucial role in helping the Leopards finish fourth in the 2024/25 season. The team narrowly missed out on a promotion play-off berth by just a single point, finishing with 47 points, one behind third-placed Casric Stars.

“Who would refuse the call of the nation? I chose Zambia wholeheartedly, and I have never regretted it,” Chibwe told BolaNews in an interview. “Honestly, this is one of my best seasons, with a record-breaking performance. We lost only two games at home the whole season and never dropped out of the Top 8.”

The South African-born keeper, who previously featured for ZESCO United, has once again become a hot topic due to his impressive performances at Lidoda Duvha. His consistency and leadership at the back have reignited conversations

around a possible recall to the Chipolopolo squad.

Chibwe remains humble but determined: “We learn every day, so I would like to better what I did this season because you are as good as your next game. The past is gone now; I look forward to the next season to improve.”

With form, experience, and a growing off-field legacy, Cyril Mwenya Chibwe’s name may soon resurface among the Chipolopolo ranks.

# JAMES CHAMANGA HONOURS COACH WEDSON NYIRENDA WITH SPECIAL RETIREMENT GIFT

By Joseph Tembo



In an emotional and heartfelt gesture, 2012 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) winner James Chamanga officially marked the end of his illustrious football career by gifting his final season jersey to his former coach and mentor, Wedson Nyirenda. The ceremony was filled with gratitude, reflection, and a deep sense of appreciation between the two football figures.

Speaking during the presentation, Chamanga expressed profound respect and admiration for Nyirenda, crediting him for laying the foundation of his professional career.

“Every journey has its beginning, and mine started with this man,” Chamanga said. “When I broke into elite football, it was Coach Nyirenda and Mr. Simataa who introduced me to the game. That’s why I gave my first jersey to Mr. Simataa and this one to my coach, my dad. He built me, the endurance, the discipline, the consistency you see in me, all started with him.”

Chamanga emphasized that the jersey he wore in his final season symbolized the bond and the pivotal role Nyirenda played in shaping his career. “I had to take this moment, as I’m ending, to give one of my most cherished items to honor him, just to say thank you.”

In response, Coach Nyirenda was visibly touched by the tribute, acknowledging the significance of the gesture.

“Out of all the coaches and all the people that have done so much for you, for you to pick me, that I did something you truly value, it means a lot,” said Nyirenda. “It’s been on my mind since you called me yesterday.

We started from humble beginnings, but when you are consistent with something, you end up high.”

Nyirenda used the occasion to praise Chamanga’s rare hunger for growth and his unwavering humility, traits he hopes today’s younger players will emulate.

“The biggest problem we have now is the low satisfaction levels among players,” he noted. “Some feel they’ve arrived after six good games or one cup win. But James wanted more, always more. Even after making money abroad, he returned home, wore the Zambian jersey again, and led Red Arrows out of a difficult period. His leadership changed everything for that club.”

Nyirenda, visibly moved, said he would frame the jersey and hang it in his living room as a lasting reminder of Chamanga’s appreciation and legacy.

“There’s nothing material you can give that can truly repay what someone has done for you. But this jersey, this moment, it’s huge for me. It means everything.”

Chamanga's retirement marks the end of a decorated career that saw him become one of Zambia's most respected footballers, known not only for his achievements on the pitch but also for his humility, leadership, and enduring commitment to the game.

As he steps away from professional football, Chamanga leaves behind not just memories of brilliance, but also a powerful example of honor and gratitude, a reminder that football is not just about trophies, but about the people who make the journey worthwhile.

# ZAMBIA DRAWN WITH COMOROS AND BOTSWANA IN GROUP D FOR 2025 COSAFA CUP

By Joseph Tembo



## HOLLYWOODBETS COSAFA CUP SOUTH AFRICA 2025

GROUP A	GROUP B	GROUP C	GROUP D
1 South Africa	1 Angola	1 Morocco	1 Zambia
2 Mozambique	2 Namibia	2 Madagascar	2 Comoros
3 Mauritius	3 Malawi	3 Eswatini	3 Botswana
4 Zimbabwe	4 Lesotho		

Zambia has been drawn into Group D of the 2025 HOLLYWOODBETS COSAFA Cup alongside Comoros and Botswana, in what promises to be a fiercely contested group at the regional showpiece set for June 4–15 in Mangaung, South Africa.

The Chipolopolo, who hold a record seven COSAFA Cup titles, will be looking to assert their dominance once again after falling short in last year’s edition. Zambia’s most recent triumph came in 2023, and the nation is hungry to add another title to its illustrious regional record.

The draw, conducted on Wednesday, also revealed some exciting clashes across the tournament. Hosts South Africa headline Group A alongside regional rivals Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Mauritius. That group is expected to deliver fireworks, particularly the long-awaited clash between South Africa and six-time champions Zimbabwe, two giants of Southern African

football eager to return to glory. South Africa last won the cup in 2021, while Zimbabwe have not lifted the trophy since 2018.

Defending champions Angola find themselves in a tough Group B with Namibia, Malawi, and Lesotho. Angola famously thrashed Namibia 5-0 in last year’s final after a goalless draw between the two in the group stage.

In Group C, North African guests Morocco, fresh from their historic run to the 2022 FIFA World Cup semifinals, will battle it out with Madagascar and Eswatini.

Zambia’s Group D campaign will see them face a rejuvenated Botswana side and an unpredictable Comoros team that has shown improvement in recent years. With only the top team from each group advancing to the semifinals, Chipolopolo will need to be clinical from the outset.

Should Zambia top their group, they will face the winner of Group A, setting up a potential high-stakes semifinal against either South Africa or Zimbabwe.

The 2025 edition will be held for the first time in Mangaung, with matches hosted at the iconic Free State Stadium, one of the venues for the 2010 FIFA World Cup, and the Dr. Petrus Molemela Stadium.

The COSAFA Cup also offers teams a crucial opportunity to prepare for the resumption of 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifiers in September, with squads set to gain vital match fitness and tactical sharpness through potentially five competitive fixtures.

Matches will be televised live on SABC and SuperSport, and streamed globally via FIFA+. The full tournament fixture list will be released soon.

Nkana FC defender Chitoshi Chinga has officially terminated his contract with the club, citing failure by the Kitwe giants to fulfill key contractual obligations. The move comes just three months after Chinga signed a new deal with the club in February this year.

The player’s departure has been confirmed, making him a free agent and adding to the growing list of challenges facing the record Zambian Super League champions.

Chinga’s decision is believed to have been influenced by Nkana Football Club’s ongoing financial difficulties, which have reportedly hindered the club’s ability to meet its obligations to players and staff.

Nkana’s financial struggles have been well-documented in recent months, with reports of delayed payments and operational constraints. Chinga’s exit underscores the growing pressure on the club as it continues to navigate a turbulent period both on and off the pitch.

The defender now looks ahead to the next chapter of his career as he explores new opportunities in the transfer market.

# ZAMBIA EXPECTED TO FIELD CHAN SQUAD AT 2025 COSAFA CUP IN STRATEGIC PUSH FOR CHAN AND REGIONAL GLORY

By Joseph Tembo



Record seven-time champions Zambia will be expected to field their locally-based African Nations Championship (CHAN) squad at the 2025 HOLLYWOODBETS COSAFA Cup, in a move aimed at maximizing preparations ahead of the CHAN tournament set for August.

Chipolopolo, drawn in Group D alongside Comoros and Botswana, enter the tournament, slated for June 4–15 in Bloemfontein, South Africa, with a rich legacy and high expectations. Zambia has lifted the coveted COSAFA Cup more times than any other nation (7), one ahead of rivals Zimbabwe (6), and remains one of the competition’s most consistent forces.

This year’s edition, hosted for the first time in Mangaung, will be staged at two iconic venues: the Free State Stadium, used during the 2010 FIFA World Cup, and the Dr Petrus Molemela Stadium. The new format guarantees teams the opportunity to play up to five matches, offering an ideal environment for tactical assessments, squad depth evaluation, and match fitness.

Head coach Wedson Nyirenda, who leads the CHAN project, is expected to use the COSAFA Cup as a vital testbed to sharpen his squad ahead of CHAN 2025, which will be jointly hosted by Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania from August 2 to 30. Zambia qualified automatically for CHAN following Mozambique’s withdrawal and will compete in

Group A alongside Kenya, Morocco, Angola, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

“This is a calculated and long-term move,” said a technical football club staff member. “The COSAFA Cup gives us competitive match exposure that mirrors the intensity and style we expect at CHAN. It’s the perfect dress rehearsal.”

The CHAN team’s preparations had previously been disrupted due to election-related administrative challenges within FAZ, limiting their camping time. The COSAFA Cup now presents a golden opportunity to build chemistry, assess tactical structures under pressure, and restore momentum.

Adding further intrigue to this year’s tournament is the debut of Morocco, semi-finalists at the 2022 FIFA World Cup, who headline Group C alongside Madagascar and Eswatini. Their inclusion adds continental flavor and raises the competitive bar of the regional championship.

A successful run in Bloemfontein would not only extend Zambia’s record to eight titles but also lay a solid foundation for a strong CHAN campaign just two months later.

As Chipolopolo prepares to step into the spotlight, the combination of legacy, strategy, and hunger for redemption could script a compelling chapter in Zambia’s football journey.

# NKANA DEFENDER CHITOSHI CHINGA TERMINATES CONTRACT AMID CLUB’S FINANCIAL WOES

By Joseph Tembo



# TOTTENHAM 1-0 MANCHESTER UNITED: SPURS WIN 2025 EUROPA LEAGUE

UEFA



Brennan Johnson's goal late in the first half proved the difference in Bilbao as Ange Postecoglou's side won the UEFA Europa League.

Brennan Johnson bundled in the only goal of a tense 2025 UEFA Europa League final as Tottenham Hotspur ended a 17-year wait for silverware with victory over Manchester United in Bilbao.

The first half was a proper arm wrestle, with both sides struggling to find their Europa League groove. Amad Diallo flashed an early effort across goal and Destiny Udogie menaced down the Spurs left but both sides were struggling to get into their Europa League groove; it was nervy, very stop-start.

We looked set to reach half-time goalless but then came a nice move down the left, Richarlison and Rodrigo Bentancur involved before Pape Sarr curled in an inswinger. Brennan Johnson got the first touch, it ricocheted off Luke Shaw before Johnson got another feather of a touch on it. Scrappy? Yes. Did Spurs care? No.

United appeared for the second period early and with renewed impetus, and so nearly had an equaliser midway through the half when Micky van der Ven brilliantly kept out Rasmus Højlund's goalbound header. Bruno Fernandes and substitute Alejandro Garnacho

threatened but, for the most part, Spurs were relatively comfortable.

To dare is to do, says the Tottenham motto. And in Bilbao, once Guglielmo Vicario had kept out Luke Shaw's 97th-minute header, they did. Forty-one years since their second UEFA Cup/Europa League title, they have a third and the significant prize of a place in the league phase of next season's UEFA Champions League.

Spurs have made a name for playing swashbuckling, attacking football but never getting over the line when it mattered. Tonight, that all changed. This was not easy on the eye, or the nerves, but Postecoglou's men showed the grit, determination and resilience to get the job done under a constant stream of attacks. A first European trophy since 1984.

No fairy tale end to the campaign for United – and no European football either next season as their first loss in the competition agonisingly comes in this final. They pushed hard in the second half to find an equaliser to cancel out Johnson's scrambled effort but the magic and the goals which carried them so spectacularly past Lyon and Athletic Club eluded Ruben Amorim and his team in Bilbao.

Ange Postecoglou, Tottenham coach: "I'm still trying to take it all in. I know what it means for this

football club. Unfortunately, the longer it goes on, the harder it is to break that cycle sometimes. I could sense the nervousness in everybody at the club because they've been in this situation before. Until you take that monkey off your back, you never understand what it feels like."

Ruben Amorim, Man Utd coach: "I just have to share the pain with our fans - they deserve better. We were the better team and the guys tried everything to win the game. There were times when we didn't create situations but that is not now. I am confident in my players – it's my job to improve them."

Brennan Johnson, Tottenham goalscorer: "I'm so happy right now. This is what it's all about. This club hasn't won a trophy for 17 years. This is what it means; it means so much. Ever since I came here it's been, 'Tottenham are a good team but can never get it done' – we got it done."

Guglielmo Vicario, Tottenham goalkeeper: "I still can't believe what we've done; it is unbelievable. We have written history, in the real sense of the term. This group of players has written history in 2025. We knew before the game that we needed the effort from everyone and we did it, we delivered. Now we must celebrate."



# HANSI FLICK SIGNS CONTRACT EXTENSION WITH FC BARCELONA UNTIL 2027

Fulltime Desk



FC Barcelona and head coach Hansi Flick have reached an agreement to extend his contract until June 30, 2027, solidifying the club's confidence in the German tactician after a historic debut season at the helm.

Flick signed the new deal on Wednesday at the club's headquarters, in the presence of club president Joan Laporta, first vice president Rafa Yuste, and sporting director Anderson Luis de Souza, popularly known as "Deco," among other key figures.

Flick's maiden campaign with Barça has been nothing short of spectacular. Under his leadership, the Catalan giants reclaimed their dominance in Spanish football, clinching a domestic treble with triumphs in La Liga, the Copa del Rey, and the Spanish Super Cup.

His side's attacking flair and resilience have made them one of the most formidable teams in Europe once again. From the season-opening comeback win against Valencia at Mestalla on August 18, Flick's Barça made a habit of turning the tide in games, securing nine comeback victories across all competitions.

The 59-year-old coach has steered the team to 43 wins in 54 matches, posting a 73% win rate—second only to Luis Enrique's 83% in a debut season. His impact has reinvigorated

a young squad and inspired belief both within the team and among fans.

Flick's reputation as a finals expert continues to grow. In his debut season with Barça, he maintained his perfect record in finals, guiding the team to victories over arch-rivals Real Madrid in both the Spanish Super Cup and Copa del Rey. His overall record in major finals now stands at seven wins in seven appearances—five with Bayern Munich and two with Barça.

Though the UEFA Champions League eluded him this season, Flick's domestic clean sweep has already placed him among the elite coaches in Barça's storied history. Only Louis van Gaal, Pep Guardiola, Ernesto Valverde, and Luis Enrique have managed to win both La Liga and the Copa del Rey in their first seasons in charge.

By tying Flick to the club until 2027, FC Barcelona signals a commitment to long-term success and continuity under a coach who has quickly built a winning culture. The German's emphasis on unity, discipline, and attacking football has already made a lasting impact, and the club believes this is just the beginning.

As Barça looks to build on this season's triumphs and return to European glory, Hansi Flick remains at the heart of that vision.

