

Gusau denies any altercation with CAF Vice President, Fouzi Lekjaa

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Niger Delta Games: Basseyy seeks future champions for Akwa Ibom



JUST LIBERATION NEWS

Weekly Sports Review

www.justliberationnews.com

Wednesday, January 21, 2026 / Vol.4 No.110 / ISSN: 3027-2165

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Anthony Joshua's driver's case adjourned to Feb.25



AFCON 2025: Osimhen, Bassey, Lookman named in CAF best XI

The Confederation of African Football (CAF) has named three Nigerians, Victor Osimhen, Calvin Bassey, and Ademola Lookman, to its Best XI for the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations.

The CAF revealed the list, which was dominated by Nigerians, Senegalese, and Moroccans, on Wednesday morning, three days after the competition.

Osimhen appeared in six games for the Super Eagles, helping the three-time African champions win bronze in Morocco.

The Galatasaray forward scored four goals during the competition.

Lookman, his compatriot and Atalanta winger, had the most goals involvement at the AFCOM, with three goals and four assists.

For Fulham's Bassey, his inclusion was not a fluke. The former Rangers man was a wall in the Nigerian defence, helping the team keep three clean sheets in the six matches he played.

The defender played all minutes for Coach Eric Chelle's side in Morocco but did not take part in the third-place play-off after being suspended.

While the Nigerians had three persons on the list, runners up Morocco and winners Senegal also dominated the team of the competition.

There were four players each from the Teranga Lions and the Atlas Lions of Morocco.



Angola, Gabon tempt Chelle with oil money

Oil-rich Angola and Gabon are making a serious move to lure Éric Chelle away from his position with the Super Eagles, leveraging their financial power from petrol dollars as they emerge as

frontrunners for the coach renowned for securing a bronze medal at AFCOM 2025.

South African sports journalist Kamogelo Motecwane confirmed this development on his official X account (formerly Twitter)

on Tuesday, stating: "Eric Chelle is in demand after AFCOM with Nigeria. Having declined Tunisia, Angola and Gabon are now pursuing the 48-year-old, with discussions with the NFF anticipated soon."

Chelle's current contract with the Super Eagles runs until 2027, and he is set to meet with the Nigeria Football Federation in the coming days to evaluate his future.

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Kayode did not address the court during

the hearing.

Following the crash, Joshua paid tribute to Ayodele and Ghami on social media, describing them as special individuals and offering condolences to their families.

The former heavyweight champion, who has family roots in Sagamu, was travelling to the town to visit relatives for New Year celebrations at the time of the accident.

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Ethan Nwaneri off to Olympique Marseille on loan

Arsenal of England's Nigerian-born youngster, Ethan Nwaneri is reportedly on his way to Olympique Marseille of France in a loan agreement that will run until June.

Sports247 gathered that, in contrast with repeated declarations by The Gunners top brass that they will not ship Nwaneri out, the lad is set to be officially unveiled by Marseille.

This was revealed by renowned players agent, Fabrizio Romano, who splashed details of the loan agreement that will see Nwaneri join former Arsenal striker and captain, Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang at Marseille.

Romano reeled out details of the deal via his social media handle on X, with the transfers expert further pointing out that Arsenal's coach, Mikel Arteta was aware of the arrangement and consented to it.

The Spanish tactician had initially stood

his ground against allowing Nwaneri leave Emirates Stadium, as he reckoned that the youngster would continue adding depth to his squad and play a crucial role as back-up forward should injuries hit any of the regular players.

As it were, Arteta did at the weekend express a lot of worries over team leader, Bukayo Saka's fitness issues, but the gaffer has lost the battle over Nwaneri, who set a series of records for The Gunners last year in the EPL and UCL.

"Ethan Nwaneri to Olympique Marseille, here we go! Deal in place on loan until June. OM to cover salary + loan fee around €4m based on appearances.

"De Zerbi spoke with Mikel Arteta about plans for Nwaneri, #AFC suggested OM as best option. NO buy clause. Back in June," Romano posted on X.



Slot happy to have Salah back for misfiring Liverpool

Liverpool boss Arne Slot said he is "happy to have" Mohamed Salah back available for Wednesday's Champions League visit to Marseille to bolster his attacking options.

Salah could make his first start for the Reds since November 26, before an explosive interview last month, which took aim at Slot.

The Egyptian accused the club of throwing him "under the bus" after he was benched for three games in a row and said he had no relationship with the Dutchman.

But he appeared as a substitute in a 2-0 Premier League win against Brighton on December 13 before jetting off for Egypt's run to the semi-finals of the Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON).

"Let's see for the line-up for tomorrow if you still think there's an issue. I spoke to him today and I'm happy to have him back," Slot said at his pre-match press conference on Tuesday.

"There's been a moment in the season where I decided not to play Mo and one moment where I decided not to take him to the game.

"For all the other games he's been in the squad and was the first substitution against Brighton so at that moment of time, there's never been an issue for me."

Salah is Liverpool's third-highest goalscorer of all time with 250 goals in 421 appearances, winning two Premier League titles and the Cham-

pions League since joining from Roma in 2017.

He signed a lucrative new two-year contract last year as he played a starring role in guiding Liverpool to a record-equalling 20th English top-flight title.

But he has been a shadow of his former self during Liverpool's struggles this season, managing just five goals in all competitions.

Slot, though, is desperately in need of firepower with fans critical of his ponderous style of play.

Liverpool are unbeaten in 12 games, but have drawn four of their last five matches either side of victory over third-tier Barnsley in the FA Cup.

The loss of Alexander Isak to a broken leg has increased the English champions' need to rediscover Salah's best form, which he showed glimpses of in scoring four times in six games at the AFCON.

He went to AFCON and did what he usually does and scored goals," added Slot.

"In his absence, I think we have done quite ok in terms of hardly conceding any chances and starting to create more and more... then it is really helpful to have Mohamed Salah."

Liverpool are 11th in the league phase of the Champions League.

The top eight qualify automatically for the last 16 while teams placed from ninth to 24th face a play-off round.



Usyk hints at Joshua's imminent comeback



Anthony Joshua has a "desire to continue" despite suffering a tragic car crash in Nigeria last month, his old foe, now close pal, Oleksandr Usyk, has said.

Earlier this month, Joshua's uncle claimed the heavyweight behemoth had informed his family he will retire following the crash. The Brit allegedly made the decision "known

to his family in private."

But 39-year-old Usyk- who famously beat Joshua twice in 2021 and 2022 and has formed a rather close bond with the Brit in

recent times- has now revealed a conversation he had with the boxing legend. During a recent interview with Ready To Fight, he said, "I've already spoken with him.

"I heard a desire to continue in his voice - for the friends he lost and for the chance to live that the Lord gave him."

Usyk has worked closely with Joshua these past few months after Joshua enlisted the help of the Ukrainian ahead of his fight with Paul last month. The 39-year-old is expected to make his return to the ring later this year, having not fought since his knockout win over Daniel Dubois back in July.

Last week, pictures emerged of Joshua returning to the gym nearly three weeks after the incident in Nigeria.

'AJ' shared snaps of him working out and hitting pads in what he described as "mental strength therapy."

He was also seen pushing himself with some lower leg exercises as well as riding a stationary bike. Further footage showed the boxing star getting in a pool in a compilation of footage.

Bolaji wins gold at Egypt International Para Badminton Championship

Africa's number one para badminton player, Eniola Bolaji, yesterday, won the Egypt 2026 International Badminton Championship, which featured players from across the world.

Bolaji, a Paris 2024 Paralympics bronze medalist, defeated world No. 7 Halime Yildiz of Turkey 2-0 (21-10, 21-4) at the New Capital Indoor Hall in Cairo.

The world number two began her campaign with a commanding 2-0 (21-9, 21-10) victory over Yildiz in the opening round before overcoming India's Tulika Jadgave 2-0 (21-10, 21-7) in the second round.

Bolaji continued her dominant run by beating India's Manasi Girishchandra Joshi 2-0 (21-11, 21-13) to set up a semifinal clash against India's Shivam Yadav Neeraj, which she won convincingly 2-0 (21-10, 21-11).

An elated president of the Badminton Federation of Nigeria (BFN), Francis Orbih, praised Bolaji's consistency for continuing to put the country on the global map.

Orbih said the African champion has repeatedly shown that Nigeria can compete and dominate on the world stage through her impressive performances. He said: "I am excited that Eniola Bolaji was able to compete at the Egypt Para Badminton International and win gold once again. In 2025, she began her journey to greatness with a victory in North Africa and went on to win all the available gold medals except one.

"I strongly believe Bolaji will have an exciting year ahead and will continue to bring pride to



Nigeria and the Federation." Orbih also commended the team's sponsors and the National Sports Commission for their continued support in the

development of para badminton.

"I want to thank GIG Logistics and the National Sports Commission for their unwavering support.

I assure you that Eniola Bolaji will continue to give her best in subsequent tournaments," he added.

Stakeholders agree on March date for NBBF board elections

Stakeholders in the country's basketball have agreed to hold a congress to decide when to hold the Nigeria Basketball Federation (NBBF) board elections.

The elections, as agreed by the stakeholders at a meeting chaired by the Director General of the National Sports Commission (NSC), Bukola Olapade, will be held on any date before March 31, 2026.

According to a source at the meeting, the parley resolved the conflict among the current board members and other stakeholders, with everybody "agreeing to work to ensure free and fair elections."

The source said that the stakeholders agreed to adopt the existing constitutions and the electoral guidelines in conducting the polls, adding that all eligible stakeholders interested in contesting for any position would be allowed to test their popularity among the electorate.

The source also revealed that the NSC has proposed a retreat involving all the federations to renew the federations' commitment to uplifting Nigerian sport as directed by President Bola Tinubu.

"The National Sports Federations retreat will go over the NSC guidelines for the federations in June 2026 after the NBBF election," the source added.



Niger Delta Games: Basseyy seeks future champions for Akwa Ibom



Akwa Ibom would be focusing more on athletes' discovery and future grooming at the second Niger Delta Games

coming up in Benin, Edo State, from February 20 to 27, the state's Commissioner of Sports, Elder Paul Basseyy, has said.

Basseyy revealed this policy thrust on Saturday while speaking on preparations for the regional games sponsored by the Niger Del-

ta Games. He also disclosed that 476 athletes and 64 coaches have been registered by the state for the competition that will have contingents from eight other states.

Registration of participants closed on Friday, and the states are now to conduct trials to select the final list of athletes that will be travelling to Benin for the Games.

Earlier, Akwa Ibom State Director of Coaching, Mrs Catherine Ewa, had announced that profiles of 250 male and 226 female athletes were successfully uploaded on the Niger Delta Games central registration portals alongside 44 men and 20 women coaches.

While expressing optimism on the prospects of the state's performance in the games, Basseyy insisted that the state will be prioritising finding athletes for the future.

Gusau denies any altercation with CAF Vice President, Fouzi Lekjaa

President of the Nigeria Football Federation, Ibrahim Musa Gusau (MON) has been described as 'total falsehood,' a report circulating in sections of the social media that he had a public spat with President of the Federation Royale Marocaine de Football (FRMF), Mr. Fouzi Lekjaa during a CAF Executive Committee meeting in Morocco.

The unsubstantiated report alleged that Gusau, who is also President of WAFU B, engaged in a hot argument with Lekjaa, who is also the 1st Vice President of the Confederation of African Football, at a meeting that took place during the just-concluded 35th Africa Cup of Nations finals in the North African Kingdom.

"I really don't know where the report is coming from. Nigeria and Morocco have very cordial relationships in the game of football, and even at the level of government, both countries have a warm relationship. Personally, I have always had a good relationship with Mr. Lekjaa.

"There was no shouting match, neither were there any insults thrown. Whoever came up with that report engaged in mongering of total falsehood."

Gusau also denied making any comments with regards to the officiating of the second semi-final of the AFCON between Nigeria and Morocco at the Prince Moulay Abdellah Stadium in Rabat on Wednesday, 14th January.

"Before the match, I had publicly made it known that the NFF was not apprehensive about the officiating. After the match, I made no comments whatsoever, and I am totally bemused at where the reporter got his story that Mr. Lekjaa and myself engaged in a shouting match because of my comments

on the officiating of the game.

ation. the Local Organization Committee. the successful AFCON that had all the glamour



"As far as the NFF is concerned, we only have praises for the Morocco Football Feder-

Government of Morocco and the Confederation of African Football for organizing a very

and glitz that will stay in our memories for many years to come."

Diomaye Faye hails 'Mission Accomplished' as Senegal conquer Africa again



Senegal barely slept on the night of January 18, 2025. From the moment the final whistle sounded in Rabat, confirming a dramatic Africa Cup of Nations final victory over hosts Morocco, the country exploded

in celebration.

In Dakar, jubilation swept through the streets. At iconic landmarks such as Place du Souvenir and the African Renaissance Monument, thousands of supporters

danced, sang, and waved national flags long into the night.

The Lions of Teranga had done it again—clenching a second continental title and adding another golden star to Senegal's footballing identity.

The triumph capped a tense and unforgettable final, one that tested the resilience and belief of the Senegalese squad.

Against a hostile atmosphere and relentless Moroccan pressure, the Teranga Lions showed composure, discipline, and unity to emerge victorious in what many have described as an improbable but deserved triumph.

President Bassirou Diomaye Faye was visibly moved by the achievement.

After officially handing the national flag to captain Kalidou Koulibaly earlier in the tournament, the president remained closely connected to the team's journey, following every match as Senegal marched toward glory.

With the mission now fulfilled, President Faye praised the players for their courage and collective spirit, describing the victory as a moment that elevates Senegal to the summit of African football.

In recognition of the historic achievement, the government declared Monday a public holiday, allowing the entire nation to celebrate in unity.

"This new star honours the whole nation," the president said, emphasizing that the title was built on resilience, teamwork, and an unwavering belief in excellence.

As Senegal revels in continental glory once again, this generation of Lions has etched its name permanently into African football history and it proves that the roar of Teranga continues to echo across the continent.

Happy 71st Birthday

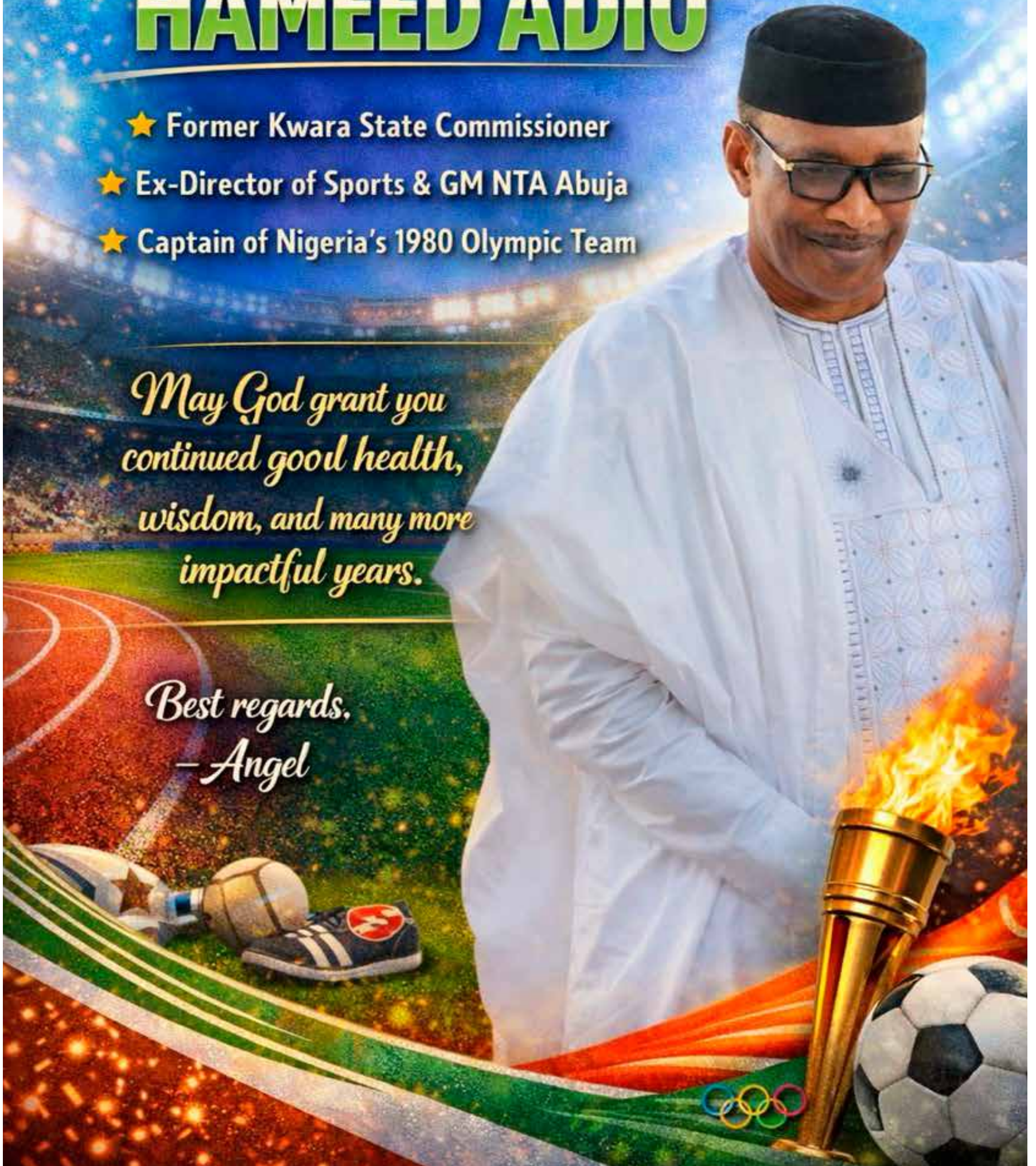
to the Legendary

HAMEED ADIO

- ★ Former Kwara State Commissioner
- ★ Ex-Director of Sports & GM NTA Abuja
- ★ Captain of Nigeria's 1980 Olympic Team

*May God grant you
continued good health,
wisdom, and many more
impactful years.*

*Best regards,
- Angel*



NSC Congratulates Olumide Oyedeji on Election as World Olympians Association Secretary General

The National Sports Commission (NSC) has congratulated former Nigeria international basketball star and sports administrator, Olumide Oyedeji, on his election as the Secretary General of the World Olympians Association (WOA).

Oyedeji was elected at the Annual General Meeting of the Association held on Sunday, a development that further elevates Nigeria's profile within the global Olympic and sports governance community.

He remains the first African to ever hold such position at the World Olympians Association (WOA).

Congratulating him on the achievement, the NSC described Oyedeji's election as well deserved, noting that it reflects his years of service, integrity, and commitment to the growth of sports and athlete welfare both locally and internationally.

Director General of the NSC, Hon. Bukola Olopade stated that "Olumide Oyedeji's election as Secretary General of the World Olympians Association is a proud moment for Nigeria and a clear recognition of his integrity, leadership, and lifelong service to sport and athlete welfare. He has consistently represented our nation with distinction, both on and off the court, and we are confident he will uphold the values of the Olympic movement while flying the Nigerian flag with pride on the global stage."



Reacting to his election, Oyedeji expressed appreciation for the support he has continued to receive from Nigerian sports leadership.

"I use this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to the DG and the Chairman of the National Sports Commission for the support they have continued to render to me and all others who strive to put our country's name on the world sporting map. I further promise to do my best to uphold the name of our country at all times," he said.

Oyedeji remains one of Nigeria's most celebrated basketball figures, having led the national team to its first-ever AfroBasket title in Tunisia in 2015. He also won silver medals at the FIBA Africa Nations Cup in 1997, 1999, and 2003, contributing significantly to Nigeria's rise in African basketball.

He also Led Nigeria Basketball Team to first ever Gold Medal in Maputo All Africa Games 2011, Captain Team Nigeria from 2006 to 2016 All Africa Games, Commonwealth Games and Olympics Games.

He currently serves as the President of the Nigeria Olympians Association (NOA), 3rd Vice President of the Nigeria Olympic Committee (NOC), and Chairman of the Nigeria Athletes Commission, roles through which he continues to champion athlete development, representation, and welfare.

FIBA Africa Zone 3 hails Oyedeji's historic election as WOA Secretary General

Nigeria's Olumide Oyedeji has been hailed across the continent after being elected Secretary General of the World Olympians Association (WOA), a landmark achievement that further elevates Africa's voice in global sports administration.

The President of FIBA Africa Zone 3, Retired Colonel Sam Ahmedu on behalf of the board, congratulated Oyedeji on his election, describing it as a historic milestone for Nigeria and Africa.

Ahmedu noted that Oyedeji's emergence as the first African to hold the influential position reflects the continent's growing relevance and credibility in international sports governance.

"Oyedeji's election is a testament to his years of service to sport and his unwavering commitment to athlete development and welfare," Ahmedu said, adding that Africa now has a stronger platform in shaping global Olympic policies.

Oyedeji won the keenly contested election after polling 55 of the 106 valid votes cast, representing 51.89 per cent, ahead of Salvador Salguero of El Salvador and Liston Bochette of Puerto Rico.

He succeeds Anthony Ledgard (OLY) of Peru and will serve a four-year term on the WOA Board.

Currently, Oyedeji serves as President of the Nigeria Olympians Association (NOA) and third Vice President of the Nigeria Olympic Committee (NOC), roles that have positioned him as a key figure in Nigerian and African sports leadership.

He is also Vice Chairman of the FIBA Africa Zone Three Development Council.

Reacting to his election, Oyedeji pledged to lead with integrity, transparency and inclusiveness, while strengthening collaboration between the WOA and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to better serve Olympians worldwide.

A former NBA player, Oyedeji was drafted 42nd overall by the Seattle SuperSonics in the 2000 NBA Draft and enjoyed a distinguished playing career.

He also captained Nigeria's D'Tigers, leading the national team to notable continental success-



and earning respect as both a player and leader. With his latest appointment, Oyedeji's jour-

ney from the basketball court to the highest levels of global sports administration stands as an

inspiration, marking a proud moment for Nigeria and the African sporting community.

9th CFASF Stakeholders Congress Unites Athletes, Coaches, Stakeholder

The 9th Annual Stakeholders Congress and Athletics Championship of the Coach Felix Academic and Sports Foundation (CFASF), successfully brought together athletes, coaches, stakeholders, and community representatives to review progress, strengthen collaboration, and promote grassroots athletics development in Kaduna State.

Held on Saturday January 3 at the Murta Square in Kaduna, the congress engaged stakeholders on sustainable sports and youth development strategies.

It also served as an avenue to review the foundation's activities and future plans, as well as provided a competitive platform for athletes through organized athletics events.

At the congress, partners were recognized and appreciated for contribution to sports development.

Notable dignitaries in attendance were, Honourable Commissioner, Kaduna State Ministry of Sports Development, Prof. Benjamin K. Gugong, represented by Director of Sports Development, Malam Hassan Buba, Patron, Engr. Musa Nimrod, represented by Veteran Coach, Charles Yayock (Rtd.),

former National President, NAATO, Mr. Akpode Goodluck, Chairman, Athletics Coaches Association Kaduna State Chapter, Rev. Michael Monyei, and Chairman, NAATO Kaduna State Chapter, Coach Micah John.

Also, some parents and guardians, of athletes of the foundation, including Mrs. Meture Faith was present.

Papers were presented by



Mrs. Isiah Grace, "Maximizing Youthfulness", Rev. Michael Monyei, "Time Management"

Coach Micah John, "Importance of Techniques in Athletics" and

Mr. Akpode Goodluck, "Importance of adhering to World Athletics standards for coaches and handlers".

The congress had partnerships and support from Patron, CFASF Kaduna, Engr. Musa Nimrod, Matron, CFASF Kaduna, Princess

Mabel Madogiemu, Comdr. Nesiema Omatsaye (Rtd.), Samuel Onikeku, Mr. Enefiok Udo-Ubong (Olympian), Coach Kayode Yahaya, Mr. Chima Nnadozie, Mr. Olusoji Fasugba (Olympian), Mrs. Isiah Grace, Mr. Kisabo, Mr. Haruna Ishaku, Chief Mary Onyali (Olympian) and Chief Amaka Ochiefu.

The foundation expressed profound appreciation to Prof. Benjamin K. Gugong, for the swift approval and support of the athletics track facility and provision of a befitting

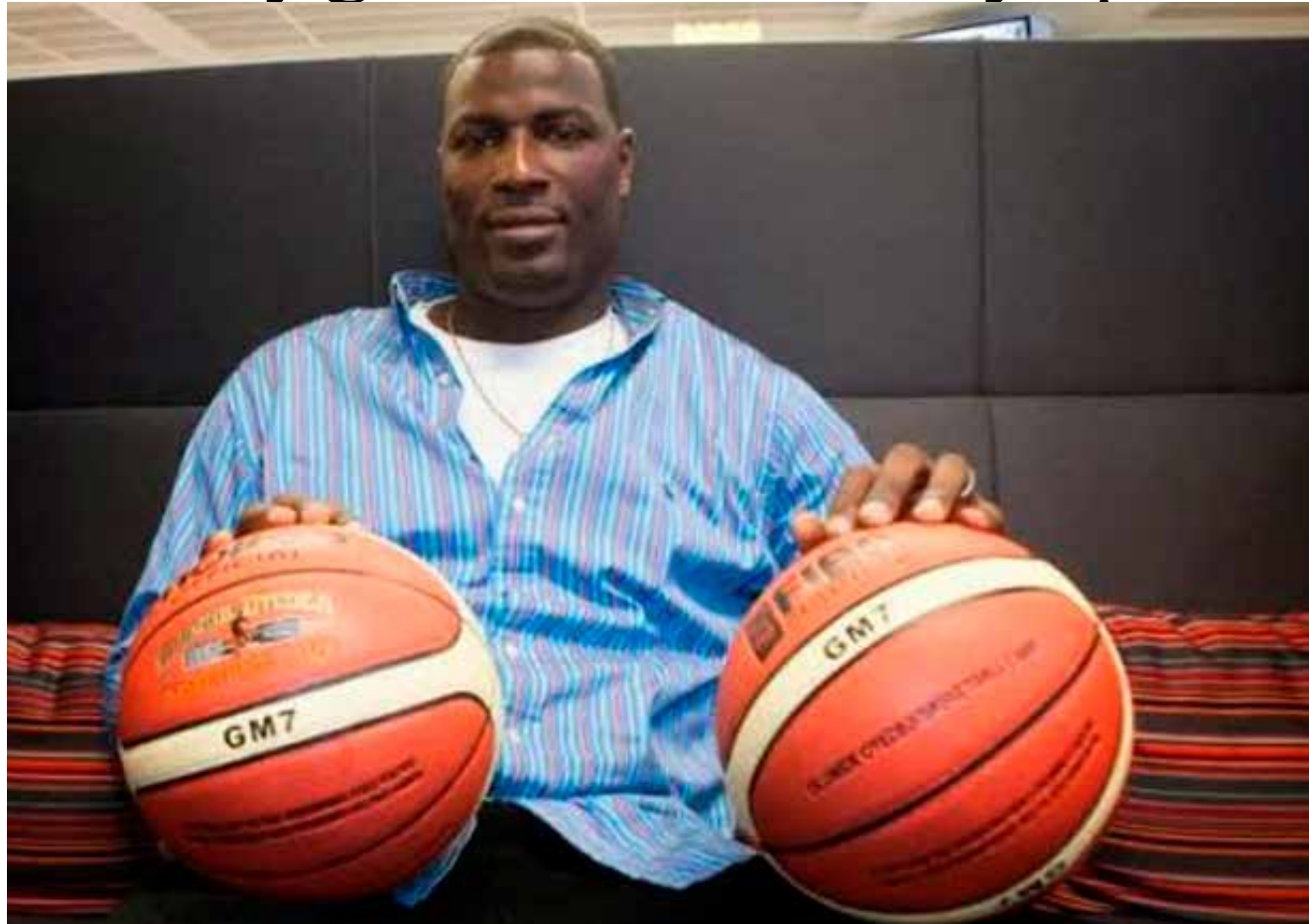
hall in proximity to the track, which greatly contributed to the success of the event.

Other activities held during the congress, included athletics competitions, were winners emerged.

Those who finished first got N10,000 cash rewards, while second and third positions got N3,000 and N2,000 respectively.

Winners were also presented with certificates.

Ex D'Tigers captain Oyedeji becomes first African secretary general of World Olympians Association



Nigeria's Olumide Oyedeji has been elected secretary general of the World Olympians Association (WOA), becoming the first African to hold the position.

Oyedeji secured 55 of the 106 valid votes cast, representing 51.89 per cent, to defeat Salvador Salguero of El Salvador and Liston Bochette of Puerto Rico in the election.

He succeeds Anthony Ledgard of Peru and will serve a four-year term on the associ-

ation's executive board alongside President Pernilla Wiberg of Sweden and Treasurer Wei-Tsu Thomas of Chinese Taipei.

Currently president of the Nigeria Olympians Association and third vice president of the Nigeria Olympic Committee, Oyedeji also chairs the Nigeria Athletes Commission.

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In his acceptance remarks, he paid tribute to the outgoing executive committee led by Joel Bouzou, acknowledging their contributions to Olympians across the world and describing their work as a lasting part of the association's history.

Oyedeji said integrity would guide every decision, transparency would define leadership actions, and inclusion would be central to the association's work. He stressed that every continent, every National Olympians Association and every Olympian would be represented and heard.

He also pledged closer collaboration with the International Olympic Committee, describing it as a key partner in advancing the Olympic Movement through open dialogue, mutual respect and shared purpose.

According to Oyedeji, the association will focus on uniting Olympians globally, empowering national bodies, amplifying athletes' voices and translating Olympic values into measurable impact.

The newly elected board includes representatives from across the continents, with Africa represented by Rosa Rakotozafy of Madagascar and Andrew Owusu of Ghana, alongside members from the Americas, Asia, Europe and Oceania.

A former professional basketball player, Oyedeji was drafted 42nd overall by the Seattle SuperSonics in the 2000 NBA Draft. He later captained Nigeria's D'Tigers to their first All-Africa Games gold medal in 2011 and co-captained the team that won the country's first AfroBasket title in 2015.

Chelle Reveals Medical Effort Behind Nwabali's AFCON Heroics

Super Eagles head coach Eric Chelle has revealed that intensive medical care and close monitoring enabled goalkeeper Stanley Nwabali to feature at the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations in Morocco, despite earlier reports suggesting he was unfit to participate in the tournament.

Nwabali, Nigeria's first-choice goalkeeper, entered the competition carrying serious injury concerns, including an ankle problem and the need for hand surgery. Doubts were raised about his availability, with even his club coach reportedly uncertain he would make the squad. However, the shot-stopper defied expectations, playing through pain throughout the tournament with the full support of the Super Eagles' medical and technical teams.

Speaking to reporters after Nigeria's 4-2 penalty shootout victory over Egypt in the third-place match at the Mohammed V Stadium, Casablanca, Chelle explained that the coaching and medical staff worked tirelessly to prepare Nwabali for the competition.

"Nwabali put in a lot of work during this short preparation," Chelle said. "What happened to Stanley has nothing to do with technical and tactical issues. You have to talk to him to get the best out of him because he is very strong."

The Malian-born tactician further disclosed that Nwabali often struggled with nerves, shaped by personal challenges, which prompted the technical crew to give him extra attention before and throughout the tournament.

"This guy can do anything for all of the players in the national team and the technical staff too," Chelle added. "He gives everything in every game. Not perfect, sometimes nervous — but if you're going to war, he's on your side. I am very proud of him like the other guys. He deserves this



victory."

As Nigeria's main goalkeeper, Nwabali performed under intense pressure during the tournament, with every error magnified by public and media scrutiny.

Although he earned praise for a solid

showing at the 2023 AFCON, his performances during subsequent qualifiers raised questions about his consistency and decision-making, fueling doubts ahead of the Morocco tournament.

Those concerns were largely silenced in

the third-place playoff, as the Chippa United FC of South Africa goalkeeper produced a match-winning performance, saving penalties from Mohamed Salah and Omar Marmoush to earn the Man of the Match award and secure Nigeria's bronze medal finish.

CAF President Rejects Accusation Of FIFA Influence



The Confederation of African Football could have done a better job of explaining its decision to move the Africa Cup of Nations from every two to four years but was standing by it, the organisation's

president Patrice Motsepe said on Saturday.

The decision was announced last month and drew heavy criticism, with several African football personalities alleging it was a measure forced upon Africa by FIFA, whose

president Gianni Infantino had six years ago advocated that the Cup of Nations be played four-yearly rather than every two years.

Motsepe rejected the assertions of undue influence from Zurich and said they would

go ahead with the Cup of Nations every four years after 2028, plus introduce an African Nations League in 2029.

"We didn't do as good a job at CAF in preparing the ground on this Afcon every four years. We must make sure that our everyday people, who we account to, must understand what we have done is good for them," Motsepe told a press conference on the eve of the final between Morocco and Senegal in Rabat.

"This is the right decision. We will indeed have a new competition, and it will be enormously successful. African football will be better," he added, Reuters reported.

"We must free ourselves as Africans and have more confidence in ourselves. It should not be about FIFA says this or UEFA says this. We can be convinced we are doing the right things, but it is important everyone on the continent is convinced we are doing the right things too. We have to educate our people on the decisions we have taken. We know that in two, three years people will see what we are talking about."

The reason Africa has held its Cup of Nations every two years while other confederations play their championship every four years is because the tournament's revenue used to provide around 80% of CAF's budget.

However Motsepe said: "The revenue of the Afcon is significantly less than the revenue we have implemented for the African Nations League. We are absolutely convinced it will work."

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GLOBAL LEADERS AWARDS

FEBRUARY
12, 2026

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Usoro Returns to Boston Indoor Grand Prix as Onwuzurike Makes Debut

Nigeria's triple jump record holder, Ruth Usoro, is set to make her return to the international stage at the 31st New Balance Indoor Grand Prix, part of the World Athletics Indoor Tour Gold, on January 24 in Boston, Massachusetts.

Usoro, who has been relatively quiet on the athletics scene and competed just once last year, is confirmed for the long jump event.

She will face a strong field that includes Americans Claire Bryant, Anna Hall, and Monae' Nichols, as well as Germany's Jasmine Moore.

Usoro first appeared at the Boston meet in 2024, finishing fourth with a 6.47m effort, and will be aiming to improve on that performance this time around.

She won't be the only Nigerian athlete in action. Rising sprint star Udodi Onwuzurike is set to make his debut at the Grand Prix, competing in the 60m.

Onwuzurike, the 2023 NCAA 200m champion and 2021 World U20 champion, will line up against a stacked field featuring USA's Jordan Anthony, the reigning Bowerman Award winner, Puerto Rico's Eloy Benitez, Jamaica's Ackeem Blake, American Cravont Charles-ton, and Terrence Jones of the Bahamas.



FECAFOOT President Eto'o Knocks FIFA Over AFCON Timing



President of the Cameroon Football Federation (FECAFOOT), Samuel Eto'o, has criticised FIFA over the proposed change to the scheduling of the Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON), describing the move as serving European interests rather than African football, BSNSports.com.ng reports.

The timing of AFCON has become a major subject of debate in recent weeks following discussions around altering the tournament's cycle from its traditional format to a longer interval.

Eto'o, a former African Footballer of the

Year, has now added his voice to the growing criticism.

Speaking on a programme titled AFCON Debate, Eto'o questioned whether hosting the continent's flagship competition every four years would benefit Africa.

"Is it in the interest of Africans to host an AFCON every four years? I think it's more in the interest of the Europeans," Eto'o said.

He argued that European clubs are the primary beneficiaries of such a change, as it would reduce the frequency with which African stars leave club football to represent

their countries in international competitions.

"They want to have players like Mohamed Salah, Sadio Mané, or Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang at their disposal," the FECAFOOT president stated.

Eto'o further accused FIFA of prioritising European clubs in its decision-making process.

"FIFA defends the interests of European clubs," the former Cameroon international insisted.

While acknowledging the working relationship between football's governing bod-

ies, Eto'o maintained that FIFA President Gianni Infantino could have handled the issue more carefully.

"There's a win-win partnership between FIFA and CAF. I'm close to Gianni Infantino and Ahmad. But I think Gianni Infantino lacked tact," he concluded.

The comments add further weight to the ongoing debate over AFCON's future, as African football stakeholders continue to express concern about decisions that could impact the continent's biggest tournament.

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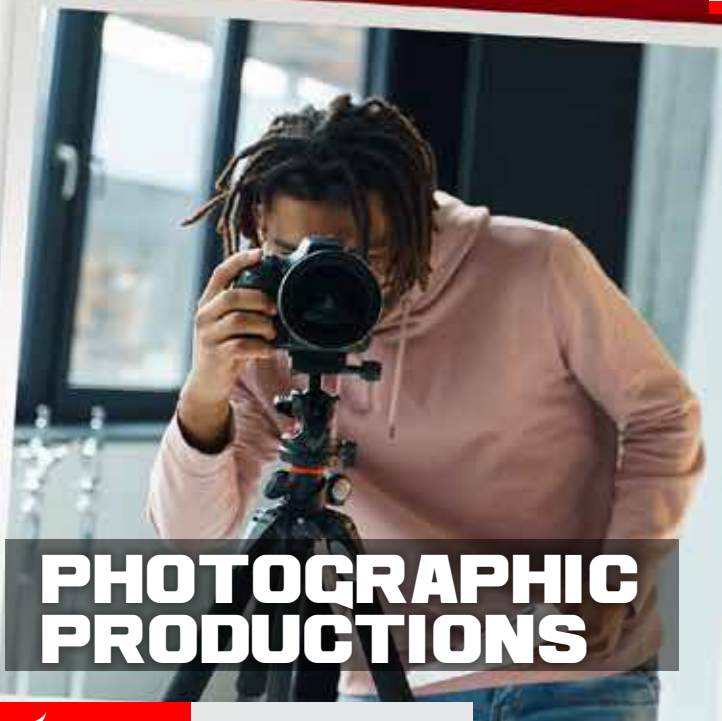


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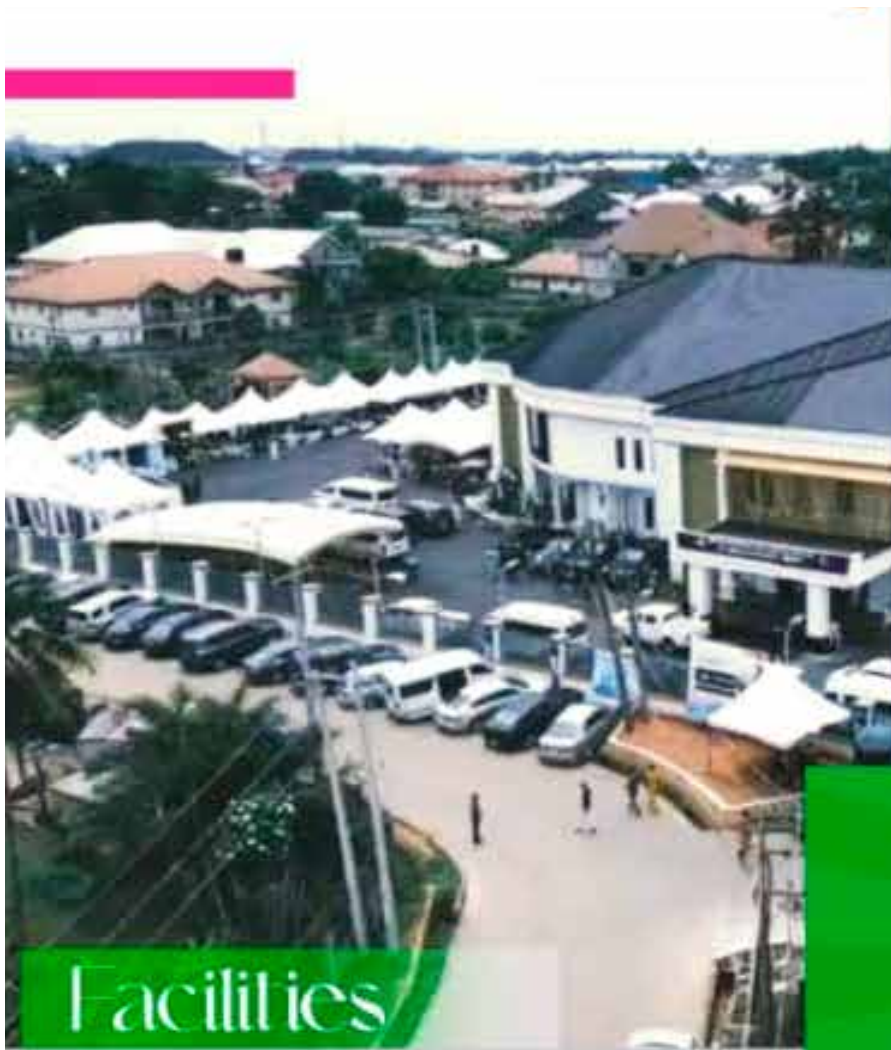
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AFCON 2025: APC Chairman Unveils Football Jobs Blueprint

BY BABATUNDE APENA

The National Chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Professor Nentawe Yilwatda, has led high-level strategic talks in Morocco aimed at repositioning Nigerian football as a driver of job creation, national unity and sustainable development, leveraging the momentum of the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON).

Professor Yilwatda was part of the Federal Government of Nigeria's official delegation to Morocco during the continental tournament, where he joined Nigerians at home and in the diaspora in rallying support for the Super Eagles. Nigeria's strong finish at AFCON 2025, which saw the team clinch third place, helped rekindle national pride and unity, providing a timely backdrop for



broader conversations on the future of football in the country.

On the sidelines of the tournament in Rabat, the APC chairman convened and participated in a landmark strategy session focused on how football can be deliberately structured to deliver economic and social dividends beyond match results. The talks explored pathways for using sports as a platform to create jobs for young

people, strengthen unity and build sustainable sports infrastructure nationwide.

The session was facilitated by the Director-General of the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Mr Silas Ali Agara, and brought together a blend of political leadership, football diplomacy and technical expertise. Participants examined Morocco's widely praised sports development model,

noting that its football success is rooted in long-term planning, coherent policies and sustained investment.

Drawing lessons from Morocco's experience, the Nigerian delegation agreed on the need for a locally adapted framework that focuses on the entire sports economy. Discussions highlighted opportunities for job creation through stadium construction and maintenance, facility man-

agement, coaching and referee development, sports administration, technology, data analytics and other allied sectors capable of absorbing thousands of young Nigerians.

Under the emerging blueprint, Professor Yilwatda is expected to provide political leadership and policy direction to drive the initiative, while Mr Agara will lead execution, ensuring the strategy translates into practical employment opportunities and skills development. FIFA Council Member and CAF leader Amaju Melvin Pinnick is to contribute global insight and access to international technical support, while policy and technology expert Esebamen Clement will spearhead the design of a data-driven and implementable framework.

A key outcome of the Rabat engagement was the emphasis on collaboration with state gov-

ernments, particularly through the Progressive Governors Forum. Governors are expected to play a central role in developing sports infrastructure and nurturing grassroots talent within their states to guarantee nationwide reach and sustainability.

Professor Yilwatda reaffirmed that football, when properly structured, can serve as a powerful tool for youth empowerment, economic growth and national cohesion. He stressed that the APC remains committed to innovative governance and the adoption of global best practices that place young Nigerians at the centre of development planning.

The Morocco talks mark a shift from rhetoric to action, signalling a new approach that positions football not just as a sport, but as a strategic engine for jobs, unity and national renewal.

Carrick Hails Bruno Fernandes as Key Player in Man United's Derby Win

Manchester United interim manager Michael Carrick has praised captain Bruno Fernandes for his outstanding performance in the Red Devils' 2-0 victory over Manchester City on Saturday.

Fernandes, playing in Carrick's 4-2-3-1 system, assisted Bryan Mbeumo for the opening goal and contributed significantly to both attacking and defensive phases. "The way he plays his role, he's really smart, and he occupies important areas on the field," Carrick said. "He

had a big responsibility for discipline, and Bryan also helped out defensively. He was the key player."

The 31-year-old returned from a hamstring injury earlier this month and has impressed since, registering at least one assist in each of his last three games. This season, Fernandes has scored five goals, provided ten assists in 21 games, and currently leads the Premier League in assists with nine, underlining his importance to Manchester United's resurgence.

Terry Praises Maguire, Urges Tuchel to Take Him to World Cup After Man U Win



Former Chelsea captain JOHN TERRY has hailed Manchester United defender HARRY MAGUIRE following the Red Devils' 2-0 victory over Manchester City

in the Premier League Manchester derby on Saturday.

TERRY, sharing his thoughts on social media, emphasized that Maguire's current form makes him

a must-have for England's squad at the 2026 FIFA World Cup. "Wow, what a performance by Man U. The team is better now that Harry Maguire is back in the squad and

playing today," Terry said. Maguire, who started the match and even hit the crossbar early, excelled defensively—winning three of five duels, making five clearances, five recoveries, and blocking a shot. Terry also praised his composure against elite striker Erling Haaland.

Signed from Leicester City for £80 million in 2019, Maguire has played 257 games for Manchester United, scoring 17 goals and providing nine assists, making him the most expensive defender in the world. Terry insists his consistent performances warrant a spot in England's upcoming World Cup squad.

Chelle Rules Out Return to Mali After Feeling 'Humiliated'

Super Eagles head coach Eric Chelle has firmly ruled out a return to the Mali national team, citing personal humiliation during his time with the West African nation. The 48-year-old, whose contract with the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) expires after the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations, led Nigeria to a third-place finish

in Morocco.

"I can tell you something, Mali is my country, it's the country of my mother," Chelle said. "And I was humiliated after the game in front of the world!"

Speculations about Chelle's future had intensified following Nigeria's podium finish at AFCON, but the French-born coach made it clear that he will not return to coach Mali,

Sevilla Welcomes Back Akor Adams and Chidera Ejuke After AFCON

Spanish club Sevilla has officially welcomed back Nigerian internationals Akor Adams and Chidera Ejuke following their participation in the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations,

DAILY POST reports.

Both players were part of the Super Eagles squad that secured third place in Morocco, featuring in the decisive playoff against Egypt on Saturday. Sevilla

shared the news on X, writing: "Our Super Eagles have landed. Welcome back, Akor and Chidi!"

During the tournament, Akor played in all seven of Nigeria's matches, scoring

twice and providing one assist, while Ejuke made two appearances under coach Éric Chelle. Their return strengthens Sevilla's squad ahead of the second half of the season



Cristiano Ronaldo Celebrates Al-Nassr's First Win of 2026

Cristiano Ronaldo expressed his delight after Al-Nassr ended a three-game losing streak with a hard-fought 3-2 victory over Al-Shabab in Riyadh on Saturday. The 40-year-old played the full 90 minutes, in contrast to his earlier substitution in the loss to Al-Hilal, and took to social media to thank fans for their support.

"Proud of this team. We did what we needed to do. Thank you to the fans for their support all the way," Ronaldo wrote on Instagram.

Despite his team's recent struggles—including draws against Al-Ettifaq and losses to Al-Ahli, Al-Qadsiah, and Al-Hilal—Ronaldo has been



consistent in front of goal, scoring in five consecutive games prior to Saturday. In the win over Al-Shabab, he had 38 touches, three shots, and added to his 15 league

goals this season, although he missed one key chance.

The victory moves Jorge Jesus's team back to second place in the league standings, edging out Al-Ahli on

goal difference. Al-Shabab later released a statement criticizing refereeing decisions during the match, which featured Ronaldo prominently.

Mo Salah: Egyptian game-changer?

BY EJIKA OGAH

Mohamed Salah's contract at Liverpool is the catalyst for him to earn at least £1m a week in total income, his lawyer and adviser has indicated. Ramy Abbas Issa told a Harvard Business School (HBS) study, seen by the Guardian, that would be a "conservative" expectation of what the forward makes.

Abbas and Salah also detail how close the highest-paid player in the club's history came to leaving before a new deal, which runs to 2025, was confirmed on 1 July 2022.

Negotiations had started in 2020 and whether Salah would extend was in doubt as late as June 2022 when, he says in the study, discussions with Liverpool had "broken down entirely".

FSG sells minority stake in Liverpool and ends search for investment

It is notable that HBS has chosen to feature Salah's contract renegotiation on its business of entertainment, media and sport programme, run by Professor Anita Elberse. She prepared the deep dive into the mechanics of the Salah deal with one of her students, Taher El Moataz Bellah; Abbas and Salah granted interviews.

Abbas will talk on Monday at the semester-long version of the course for MBA students. A four-day executive edition has attracted numerous high-profile football figures. Previous attendees have included Gerard Piqué, Kaká, Edwin van der Sar and Clarence Seedorf.

Elberse's case studies present a story and invite discussion within the class. They are open-ended, typically finishing on a cliff-hanger, which in this instance was a phone call in June 2022 between Abbas and Salah before the former made the final, make-or-break counter-offer to Liverpool. Abbas was in Dubai; Salah on holiday in El Gouna, a resort town on Egypt's Red Sea.

The study includes Abbas's take on the negotiations shortly before he made that counter-offer. "We are still very far apart. Mohamed isn't going to throw away his contract because of a 5% difference in what we are asking for and what they are willing to give – it is much more than that."

Abbas goes on to deliver the killer line that throws unseen light on the scale of the lone figure-head enterprise that is Salah.

"If we find a way to get Liverpool to agree to the salary we have in mind and if Mohamed performs at a level he has achieved in the past seasons ..." Abbas says, "we conservatively expect the total amount received by Mohamed and the image rights companies over the next few years from both his playing contract and his image rights contracts to be somewhere between €54m [£46.8m] and €62m [£53.7m] per year."

The study ends with a quote from Salah.

"Renewing at Liverpool would be one of the biggest milestones of my career," he says. "But we have to do this the right

way.
I've

unclear from the study. Club sources believe he earns more from third parties, such as his commercial tie-ups with Adidas, the Bank of Alexandria in Egypt, PepsiCo, Gucci and

to Salah's starts, goals and assists. Abbas's counter was that more variable and less fixed had to mean a significant increase in the total value of the deal. "I realise that this would make Mohamed's contract the highest value contract in the history of Liverpool but he is worth it," Abbas says.

The study examines how the bonuses might be structured and the attendant complications, including whether, in Abbas's words, "certain team performance bonuses Mohamed receives should be, as Liverpool would prefer, dependent on him scoring a certain number of goals or providing a certain number of assists". Then there are the intricacies of Salah's image rights; the levels to which Liverpool are permitted to use them, even potential conflicts between his personal image rights activities and club sponsorships.

What also stands out is something often commented upon at Liverpool: the depth of trust between Abbas and Salah. It is certainly rare to have a non-family member with no other clients represent a global superstar.

It began with a chance meeting in 2015 when Salah was at Chelsea and Abbas, who was born in Colombia but largely raised in the UAE, was a part of Juan Cuadrado's management team. Cuadrado, the Colombia winger, was Salah's teammate at Stamford Bridge.

"Ramy was there with Cuadrado, I remember we met and he spoke to me in Arabic," Salah says. "I didn't get it at first – a Colombian speaking Arabic? So we started having a conversation."

It led to Abbas giving Salah some advice on his loan move from Chelsea to Fiorentina and it is fair to say that things have developed. One final point is unavoidable. Salah has come a long way since he signed his first professional con-

learned throughout my career that if you want to be successful, it is important to invest in yourself not just physically but also mentally. That is true on the field, but also off the field. You have to control your emotions and be ready for the pressure."

No details are given about how the decisive meeting went but it is a matter of record that Salah's deal was announced in pretty short order. In other words, it went well and the reader is invited to conclude that Liverpool agreed to Abbas's demands.

How much Liverpool are paying Salah is

Salah's successful association with the club has not only led to a hugely lucrative playing contract but helped to drive other revenue streams. It is no great stretch to see how Salah helping Liverpool to do well and become more visible could trigger bonuses in his deals away from the club.

Performance-related pay – or variable pay, as it is called in the study – is fundamental. One major issue in Salah's contract renegotiation was the split between guaranteed pay and variable, with Liverpool making a push for a higher share of the latter – linked

tract as a 13-year-old at Al Mokawloon in Cairo and it earned him a monthly salary of 125 Egyptian pounds or £3.32.

At the third place match of AFCON 2025 Mo's penalty was saved by Nigerian goalkeeper Stanley Nwabali, paving way for the victory of the Super Eagles over the Pharaohs of Egypt, but this will in no way dim Salah's shine. He is still a game-changer.

