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Edition 026 - Friday October 9, 2026

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KUNDANANJI JOINS CHICAGO STARS IN US$700,000 DEAL

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ANALYST URGES FANS TO PAY, SUPPORT ZAMBIAN FOOTBALL

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MULENGA CHALLENGES FAWUZ TO PUT PLAYER WELFARE FIRST

By Lucky Chama



Former Zambia international winger and football analyst Clifford Mulenga has challenged the Footballers and Workers Union of Zambia (FAWUZ) to prioritise the welfare, rights and protection of footballers.

Mulenga was reacting to FAWUZ's announcement of a "Pitch of the Month" competition aimed at recognising clubs and groundsmen for maintaining good playing surfaces.

While acknowledging the importance of quality pitches to player safety, performance and the standard of football, Mulenga questioned whether the initiative should be among the union's main priorities.

"As a former professional footballer, I understand better than most how important a good playing surface is to player safety, performance and the quality of the game," Mulenga said.

"But as a former player, I also have to ask an uncomfortable question: Is this really where a Players' Union should be putting its strongest energy and resources?"

Mulenga said FAWUZ's primary responsibility should be to protect the interests of footballers, particularly on employment and welfare matters.

He questioned whether every professional footballer has a copy of their signed contract and whether clubs are honouring the agreements they enter into with players.

He also raised concerns over the timely payment of salaries, payslips and employment documentation, medical insurance, injury-related protection and clubs' statutory obligations towards their employees.

Mulenga further questioned what support is available to players when clubs breach contracts or fail to pay salaries for extended periods.

"What legal support does FAWUZ provide when a player's employment rights are violated?" he asked.

"These are not secondary matters. These are the core issues of footballers' welfare."

Instead of focusing only on pitches, Mulenga proposed that FAWUZ introduce a similarly visible initiative to recognise clubs that uphold strong player welfare standards.

He suggested a "Player Welfare Standards of the Month/Season" initiative that could recognise clubs that consistently pay players on time, provide copies of contracts, honour contractual obligations, offer adequate medical cover and maintain proper welfare standards.

He also proposed recognising clubs that respect employment law, maintain transparent communication with players and provide appropriate support when players suffer injuries.

Mulenga said such an initiative would have a direct impact on the lives and careers of footballers.

He stressed that he had no objection to FAWUZ recognising groundsmen and clubs for maintaining good pitches, describing them as important stakeholders in football.

"By all means, recognise the groundsmen. They are important stakeholders in our game and deserve appreciation, but let's not lose sight of the person actually playing on that pitch. The footballer," he said.

Mulenga argued that while a good pitch can help protect a player's physical wellbeing, a strong players' union should also safeguard the player's career, livelihood, rights and future.

"A good pitch can protect a player's body. A strong Players' Union must also protect the player's career, livelihood, rights and future," he said.

Mulenga stressed that his comments were not intended as an attack on FAWUZ but as a challenge for the union to play a stronger role in protecting footballers.

"This is not an attack on FAWUZ. It is a challenge to the union I believe should be doing much more for the footballer," he said.

He urged FAWUZ to place player welfare at the centre of its activities and ensure that footballers remain its primary focus.

"Let's get the priorities right," Mulenga said.

KUNDANANJI JOINS CHICAGO STARS IN $700,000 DEAL

By Lucky Chama



Zambia national team forward Racheal Kundananji has joined Chicago Stars FC from Bay FC in a deal worth $700,000 in intra-league transfer funds, becoming the first signing under the club's new Chief Soccer Officer Vlatko Andonovski.

Kundananji has signed with Chicago through the 2027 NWSL season and will occupy an international roster spot.

Andonovski described the 25-year-old forward as a proven goalscorer and fierce competitor as the Stars begin building their squad for the 2027 season and beyond.

"Racheal is a proven goal scorer and a fierce competitor, and we're thrilled to add a player of her quality to our roster," Andonovski said.

"Her accomplishments at the league and international levels are a testament to her standards and work ethic, and we look forward to seeing the impact she will make on our team as we build for 2027 and beyond."

Kundananji said she was honoured to join the historic Chicago club and was eager to meet the supporters.

"Joining a historic club like the Chicago Stars is an incredible honor," Kundananji said.

"I can't wait to step onto the pitch and work hard to help the team. I'm super excited and looking forward to meeting our amazing fans, and to give everything I have for this badge."

Kundananji leaves Bay FC after three seasons, having helped the club reach the NWSL playoffs during its inaugural season.

She made 63 regular-season appearances for Bay FC, starting 54 times and playing 4,902 minutes. She finished her spell as the club's all-time leading scorer with 12 goals and 11 assists.

Kundananji scored her first NWSL goal on her league debut against Houston Dash on March 30, 2024.

Before moving to the United States, Kundananji spent two seasons with Madrid Club de Fútbol Femenino from 2022 to 2024.

During her first season with Madrid CFF, she scored 25 goals in 29 appearances to finish second in the league scoring charts. Her campaign included braces against Real Sociedad and Barcelona, as well as a hat-trick against Alhama CF.

In the 2023-24 season, she made 11 starts in 14 appearances, scoring eight goals and providing two assists.

Kundananji has also established herself as one of Zambia's leading international forwards since making her senior debut in 2018.

At the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup, Zambia's first appearance at the tournament, she started all three matches and scored in the Copper Queens' historic 3-1 victory over Costa Rica, their first Women's World Cup win.

After helping Zambia qualify for the 2024 Paris Olympics, Kundananji scored twice against Australia during the group stage.

In 2025, she earned five national team call-ups and scored nine goals as Zambia reached the quarterfinals of the Women's Africa Cup of Nations.

She continued her contribution in 2026, helping Zambia win the Four Nations tournament after scoring and assisting in the decisive victory over Malawi. She also scored against Egypt in Zambia's opening match of the 2026 WAFCON.

Kundananji is currently with the Copper Queens as they face Uganda in the first leg of the CAF Women's Olympic Qualifiers, with the return leg scheduled for Tuesday.

She is expected to join Chicago ahead of the club's penultimate home match of the season against Seattle Reign FC on October 18.


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UGANDA COME FROM BEHIND TO BEAT COPPER QUEENS 2-1

By Lucky Chama



Uganda came from behind to beat Zambia 2-1 at Hamz Stadium in the first leg of the CAF Women's Olympic Qualifiers, leaving the Copper Queens with a narrow deficit to overturn in Tuesday's return leg.

Zambia made a bright start and took the lead in the fifth minute through Prisca Chilufya, who finished from a Barbra Banda assist.

Banda had threatened as early as the opening minute when she won a free kick in a promising position, but her effort went straight into the hands of the Ugandan goalkeeper.

The Copper Queens continued to press, with Racheal Kundananji seeing her effort blocked inside the box in the 11th minute.

Uganda responded with pressure of their own, as Fazila Ikwaput forced a save from the Zambian goalkeeper before the hosts struck the upright in the 22nd minute.

Uganda eventually found the equaliser in the 33rd minute when Agness Nabukenya converted a free kick to make it 1-1.

Banda came close to restoring Zambia's lead before the break, but her header went just wide, while Kundananji failed to connect with Prisca Chilufya's low cross.

The sides went into halftime level.

Interim head coach Charles Haalubono made three changes early in the second half, bringing on Evarine Katongo, Martha Tembo and Eneless Phiri for Racheal Nachula, Avell Chitundu and Kundananji.

The changes improved Zambia's ball movement, but Uganda completed the turnaround in the 57th minute when Kabene Sylvia scored to put the hosts 2-1 ahead.

The Copper Queens pushed for an equaliser, with Eneless Phiri testing the Ugandan goalkeeper in the 62nd minute. The goalkeeper was injured while making the save, resulting in a stoppage for medical attention.

Phiri went close again in the 74th minute when her free kick struck the crossbar with the goalkeeper beaten.

Zambia continued to press late on and won a free kick on the edge of the box in the 88th minute after Phiri was brought down. Mercy Chipasula took the set piece, but her delivery failed to find a teammate in the box.

Uganda held on to secure the 2-1 victory and take a one-goal advantage into Tuesday's return leg.

Haalubono admitted that Zambia did not show enough hunger in the first half and stressed the need for greater commitment in the decisive second leg.

"Not the result we wanted, but it has happened, so we just have to work well."

The interim coach said Zambia struggled to keep possession after taking the lead.

"First half, we led, but after scoring, we sat back and we were losing the ball easily. We couldn't hold the ball."

Haalubono was encouraged by Zambia's second-half response following the changes, saying the team improved its passing and movement.

"Second half, we came in better after making those changes. For me, according to what I saw, the changes we made improved the ball pass and move."

He said the major weakness was the failure to create a clear scoring opportunity despite the improved performance.

Haalubono also challenged the players to show greater hunger when representing the national team, insisting that selection should be based on commitment rather than reputation.

"It's not about where you are coming from or your name, it's about the will to play for the country. We have to play players who really want to win and to go forward."

He acknowledged Uganda's fighting spirit and said Zambia must match that intensity in the return leg.

"You saw how Uganda played, they were fighting for each and every ball. Us, we lacked a bit, so we have to wait for a win. It doesn't come easy, we have to fight for a win."

Haalubono also pointed to the artificial playing surface as a factor, saying Zambia could perform better on natural grass in the return leg.

Despite the setback, Zambia remain in the tie and need to overturn the one-goal deficit on Tuesday to keep their hopes of qualifying for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympic Games alive.

NYIRENDA TARGETS PROMOTION WITH JUMBE SPORTS

By Lucky Chama



Jumbe Sports midfielder Joseph Nyirenda says the team is targeting the FAZ Lusaka Provincial Division Two title and promotion to Division One.

Nyirenda, who is in his fourth year with the club, said the team's main objective this season is to finish as champions and secure promotion.

"As a team, this season we want to win promotion and be crowned Division Two champions," Nyirenda said in an interview with Full Time.

The midfielder, known for his football intelligence and passing ability, has also set personal targets as he looks to contribute more goals and assists.

Nyirenda said he is targeting at least 10 goals and seven assists this season, after managing one goal and five assists last campaign.

"My target this season is to score 10 or more goals and provide seven assists. Last season I only scored one goal and had five assists," he said.

The budding midfielder has developed through grassroots and academy football in Lusaka.

He started his football journey in Chilenje Township in Kabwata Constituency, where he played for more than seven years before a brief stint at Arakan Barracks.

He later returned to Chilenje and joined Chilenje Youth Soccer Academy, where he worked under coach Patrick Tiga Kawinga for more than five years.

Nyirenda subsequently moved to Maestro United Zambia, an academy based in Chilenje, as he continued to develop his game.

The midfielder has already set his sights on a future at the highest level of Zambian football, naming MTN Super League champions Power Dynamos among his dream clubs.

He also has ambitions of playing in Europe for Spanish giants Barcelona.

"My dream clubs in Zambia are Power Dynamos and NAPSA Stars, and in Europe, FC Barcelona," Nyirenda said.

Nyirenda also revealed the players he looks up to, naming Zambia international Owen Tembo as his local role model and Real Madrid midfielder Federico Valverde as his inspiration in Europe.

"My role model in Zambia is Owen Tembo, and in Europe it is Federico Valverde," he said.

With promotion firmly in sight, Nyirenda hopes his individual progress can match Jumbe Sports' ambitions as the club pursues a place in Division One.

Jumbe will this week host log leaders George United at home in Week 5

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CHINGA URGES YOUNG PLAYERS TO STAY FOCUSED AND DISCIPLINED

By Lucky Chama



Zimbabwe-based defender Chitoshi Chinga has urged young Zambian footballers aspiring to reach the professional level to remain focused, disciplined and persistent in their pursuit of their careers.

The CAPS United defender said the journey to professional football can be challenging and players should not allow setbacks or rejection from coaches to derail their ambitions.

Speaking in an exclusive interview with Fulltime, Chinga said maintaining focus is one of the most important qualities for young players hoping to progress to the highest levels of the game.

“I think the most important thing is to remain focused because football is a challenging sport,” Chinga said.

He said discipline must also be at the centre of a young player’s development, stressing that football demands commitment both on and off the pitch.

“You just have to be focused and not give up and be disciplined because football requires you to be disciplined and focused,” he said.

Chinga acknowledged that young players will not always impress every coach and may face periods when opportunities do not come their way.

“You can't be better for every coach. That's how it is. So, you don't have to give up,” he said.

Instead, the defender encouraged players to continue working hard and remain patient, saying their opportunity will eventually come if they maintain their commitment.

“You have to go again. You have to go again. You push, you push, your time will come,” Chinga said.

He also urged aspiring footballers to remain grounded throughout their development and not allow setbacks to affect their belief in themselves.

Chinga further encouraged young players to maintain their faith in God as they pursue their football ambitions.

“And always believe in God because God is the one who makes a way for us,” he said.

The defender’s message comes as increasing numbers of young Zambian players seek opportunities in professional football both locally and abroad.

For Chinga, talent alone is not enough, with focus, discipline, resilience and patience essential qualities for players hoping to build successful careers in the game.

CHAMA URGES FANS TO PAY, SUPPORT ZAMBIAN FOOTBALL

By Lucky Chama



Football analyst Puncherello Chama has called on Zambian football fans to play their part in rekindling interest in the local leagues by attending matches, paying gate charges and buying club merchandise.

Chama said supporters have a key role to play in helping revive the popularity and commercial value of Zambian football as the various leagues continue with their campaigns.

Speaking in an interview with Fulltime Sports, Chama said fans should move beyond simply following local football from a distance and provide direct financial support to clubs.

“For us, the fans, what we need to do is turn up for games, pay. Pay to enter into the stadium, buy a jersey,” Chama said.

He encouraged supporters who may not immediately afford a club jersey to save towards purchasing one, saying buying merchandise is another way of supporting teams.

“If you cannot afford to buy a jersey there and then, try and see if you can save a bit of money over time and then eventually buy a jersey,” he said.

Chama was speaking against the backdrop of a busy weekend of domestic football, with matches being played across the country in the men’s and women’s leagues.

He pointed to fixtures such as Zanaco against Red Arrows, Lusaka Kafue Celtic and other games across the various competitions as opportunities for fans to reconnect with the local game.

The analyst said the Zambian football calendar provides supporters with plenty of matches to watch, including National League and women’s football fixtures.

Chama believes increased attendance and direct financial support from fans can help clubs build stronger foundations while creating a better atmosphere around domestic matches.

He stressed that paying to enter stadiums and purchasing club merchandise should become part of the culture of supporting local football.

The analyst's call comes as Zambian football continues to look for ways of attracting bigger crowds and increasing interest in domestic competitions.

For Chama, rebuilding the connection between clubs and supporters requires action from both football administrators and the fans themselves, with supporters expected to demonstrate their commitment by turning up and contributing financially to the teams they support.

RUSSELL TO TAKE FURTHER GRID PENALTY THIS SEASON

By BBC Sport

George Russell says he will be taking a further grid penalty this season in addition to the one he has been hit with for this weekend's Singapore Grand Prix.

The Briton will start Sunday's race from the back of the grid because he needs to fit a new engine which takes him beyond his permitted number for the season.

But he says that he will have to take another new engine, as soon as a planned upgrade is ready, to get him to the end of the season.

Russell said: "You get (a limit of) four engines a season, so six races on each, and we have seven races to the end. So I will be taking another penalty, so yeah it's pretty relentless at the moment."

Russell's engine failure in Malaysia scuppered Mercedes' previous plan for him to last out with his older engine until the upgrade was ready, most likely for the next race, the United States Grand Prix in Austin.

"I knew I was going to have a penalty," Russell said. "The plan



was always to go in Austin, and obviously Singapore is the second hardest track to overtake on on the calendars. So you would never choose to do it (here).

"But we have no engines because of all of the various failures, so there was no engine I could have reverted to from earlier in the season. With the failure I had to take it.

"We don't have the (upgrade) this weekend, and because there are seven races remaining, you can either choose to roll the dice and hope it lasts for seven races, but also suffer a performance offset (as the engine degrades), or just accept I'll be taking another penalty."


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THE SCORCHERS GET FULL HOUSE

By The Nation



The Scorchers have intensified their preparations ahead of this afternoon's 2028 Los Angeles Olympics second round first leg following the arrival of their key foreign-based players.

Football Association of Malawi (FAM) operations director Gomezgani Zakazaka yesterday confirmed that US-based forward Temwa Chawinga, France-based duo of Tabitha Chawinga and Rose Kabzere as well as Chimwemwe Madise, who plays in the Democratic Republic of Congo, have joined the squad.

However, the Malawi Women's National Football Team will be without their Sweden-based playmaker Faith Chimzimu due to injury.

He said: "Most of the foreign-based players that were called are in.

"It is Faith Chimzimu who has been ruled out due to an injury, but we expect her to be part of the squad that will travel to Harare for the return match."

Zakazaka also said another US-based player Asante Khamula of Washington Adventist University, who earned her maiden Scorchers call-up last week, will not join the squad due to logistical issues.

By press time, Scorchers coach Lovemore Fazili could not be reached for an update on the team's preparations and whether they have made any research on the Mighty Warriors, a side that they have never beaten in their three previous meetings.

But at a press conference where he announced the provisional squad, he said the qualifiers will also help the Scorchers prepare for the 2027 Women's World Cup.

"We just need to continue from where we left at the 2026 Women's Africa Cup of Nations. We need to win this game with a good performance and we expect a positive result" said Fazili.

On the other hand, Zimbabwe Women's National Football Team new expatriate coach Stella Gotal last week spoke highly of the Scorchers ahead of the back-to-back qualifiers.

IHF CONSIDERS CHANGES TO 7-AGAINST-6 RULE AS 2027 TRIALS LOOM

By Enock Phiri



The International Handball Federation (IHF) is considering a major change to one of modern handball's most influential tactical systems, with the future of 7-against-6 play now under serious discussion.

The rule, which allows teams to replace their goalkeeper with an additional outfield player, has become a prominent tactical weapon in recent years. However, growing concerns over its impact on the balance and natural flow of the game have prompted the IHF to consider whether it should be removed or modified.

Philippe Bana, president of the French Handball Federation (FFHB) and first vice-president of the IHF, has confirmed that discussions are ongoing.

The IHF Council is expected to decide in January whether the proposed changes should be tested during the 2027 Youth and Junior World Championships.

The issue was also discussed by coaches and handball experts in Cairo during last week's Club World Cup, with several prominent figures contributing to the debate, including French national team coach Talant Dusjebaev.

According to Bana, the current 7-against-6 system can reduce the impact of suspensions, disrupt the natural logic of the game and create an element of inequality, particularly when teams are able to shoot at an unguarded goal.

Despite the concerns, the IHF has not made a final decision.

Instead, the governing body appears likely to adopt an experimental approach, testing possible alternatives before deciding whether the rule should be abolished, restricted or retained.

The IHF has already spent several years analysing the tactical impact of 7-against-6 play, which has significantly influenced how teams approach both attacking and defensive situations.

A decision to alter the rule would therefore have major consequences for coaches and players, potentially forcing teams to rethink established tactical systems.

For now, the 7-against-6 system remains in place, but the discussions suggest that one of handball's defining tactical innovations could be approaching a major turning point.

DESIREE ELLIS WARNS BANYANA NOT TO GET DRAWN INTO MADAGASCAR MIND GAMES

By IOL



Desiree Ellis has urged Banyana Banyana to block out the unusual circumstances surrounding Friday's Olympic qualifier against Madagascar and focus on delivering the ruthless performance that has sometimes eluded them on the continental stage.

Madagascar's home leg of the 2028 Los Angeles Olympic Games qualifier will be played at the Free State Stadium, despite South Africa being the 'away' side, after the island nation was unable to provide a suitable venue.

There will also be no spectators, with Madagascar requesting that Friday's match be played behind closed doors.

Rather than allowing the strange setting to unsettle her players, Ellis believes Banyana have experienced enough of African football to recognise the psychological element and move on.

"We know sometimes it's psychological games, but we've played in Africa and we've been through a lot of things, so it's just something that we will brush off and make sure that we get the result," Ellis said.

Banyana will effectively have home conditions for both legs, with the return scheduled for Tuesday at the same venue, but Ellis knows that advantage will count for little if they fail to put Madagascar under pressure from the outset.

"We have to really make sure that we start well," Ellis said. "Games have shown that if you don't take the bull by the horns from the start, you end up having to struggle to break down an opponent, struggling to put the ball in the back of the net."

That warning comes with the recent Women's Africa Cup of Nations still fresh in Ellis' mind. Banyana created opportunities in several matches in Morocco but were not clinical enough to turn them into results.

"We probably should have beaten Tanzania, had very good opportunities even against Morocco, even against Burkina Faso," Ellis said. "And we need to start taking those chances because it was shown during Wafcon that if you don't take your chances, the result doesn't go your way."

It is a lesson Ellis wants carried directly into the Olympic campaign, with Banyana needing to combine their attacking threat with defensive discipline.

The stakes are significant. South Africa have not been to the Olympics since Rio 2016. Now they face a considerably longer route back to the Games.

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