

Tanzania Becoming a Haven for Foreign Players



DAR ES SALAAM, Tanzania, August 19, 2016 (CAF) -- Football in the East African country of Tanzania is on the rise, and is becoming a haven for foreign players notably from neighbouring countries, West Africa and Southern Africa.

With the new season just days away, as many as 12 new foreign players will light up the impending premier league.

The eyes and ears of many a football lover is on former Champions, Simba, eyeing a first ever league title after a trophy-less spell in the last four seasons. In that regard, the Msimbazi Street Boys have roped in 12 new players taking their tally to over four scores in terms of recruitment since their last league triumph during the 2011/12 season.

Simba are so much hungry for the league crown and have gone beyond the borders of Tanzania to beef up the squad. Amongst them is Burundian hitman Laudit Mavugo, top scorer in his native country for the past two seasons.

Mavugo was eyeing a move to Europe preferably France which never came through. Eventually, he penned for Simba after his previous club Vital'O and the former failed to agree on a deal last season.

"I could have joined Simba last season, but Vital'O insisted I see out the remaining year on my contract. I am happy to be here now. I want a new challenge and it is my expectation that I will get that at Simba. Also, I want to win trophies with Simba," said Mavugo who netted a total of 61 goals for Vital'O during the last two seasons in Burundi.

Simba's foreign legion also include DR Congo duo, Mussa Ndusha and Besala Bokungu; experienced Zimbabwean defender Method Mwanjali and Ivorian Frederic Blagnon, joining the likes of Juuko Murshid (Uganda) and Vincent Angban (Cote d'Ivoire) who played with Msimbazi Steeet Boys last season.

On the other side of the capital, Dar es Salaam, big spenders Azam have brought on board four Spanish technical persons plus a host of players from other countries. The Spanish quartet consists of Zeben Hernandez (Head Coach), Yeray Romero (Assistant Coach), Jonas Garcia (Physical Trainer) and Pablo Borges (goalkeepers' trainer).

Also joining the Ice Cream makers are Ghanaian duo Enock Agyei and Daniel Amoah from CAF Confederation Cup campaigners, Medeama; Ivorian goalie Daniel Yeboah and utility player Julius Bruce Kangwa from Zimbabwean side, Highlanders.

Azam coach Hernandez is already looking forward to the new season with the ultimate as his target.

"I am still trying to introduce my style. So far I'm happy with the way each player is working. Azam is a big club and if we stick to our plan we can win title," remarked the Spanaird.

Azam have grown to become the third force in Tanzania football behind local giants, Young Africans and Simba; and has finished runner-up to Yanga for the past two seasons thanks to the financial injection by billionaire owner Said Salim Bhakresa. They also have Ivorian duo Kipre Bolou and Serge Wawa as well as Rwandan Jean Baptiste Mugiraneza on their roster.

On the otherhand, Yanga have been quiet on the transfer market bringing in Zimbabwean Obrey Chirwa as they eye a hat-trick of league triumphs; with head coach Hans Van der Pluijm

insisting he has enough materials at his disposal for the job.

"Our squad is strong enough to win the league, but we have to look for more option to strengthen it for next year CAF Club tournament. We will be facing a big challenge this time, and we will need more quality and experienced players" said the Dutchman.

Yanga already has six non-Tanzanian players in Daniel Ngoma and Thaaban Kamusoko (Zimbabwe); Haruna Niyonzima and Mbuyu Twite (Rwanda); Vincent Bossou (Togo) and Amissi Tambwe (Burundi).

Whilst Yanga, Simba and Azam are highly favoured in the battle for the diadem, newly promoted trio; African Lyon from Dar es Salaam, Ruvu Shooting from the Coastal Region and Mbao from Mwanza are expected to fight for survival in the elite division. Historically, at least one promoted side has failed to beat the drop in the Tanzanian top flight.

Despite the odds not in their favour, Communication Officer of Ruvu Shooting, Masau Bwire has played down on the unfavourable record insisting his side's motivated by the surprise performance of Leicester City in England, which saw the unfancied side win the league last season.

"We are not in the premier league to escape relegation; we have come to fight and possibly win the league. If Leicester City did it in England, why can't we do it here," Bwire declared.

Surprisingly, fellow newcomers Mbao have signed four foreign players, being the only promoted side to travel beyond Tanzania to boost their squad, and according to Assistant Coach Bakari Best, a top three finish, remains their target.

"We are not aiming to win the league in our first season. We want to finish in the top three. After we can aim higher," said Best.

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Other notable players in the Tanzanian top flight are Ugandan Joseph Owino (Stand United), Malawian Owen Chaima (Mbeya City) and David Aussoman from Cote d'Ivoire (Stand United).

Meanwhile, after months of waiting, the new season is expected kick off at the weekend but not without the traditional curtain-raiser, the Community Shield which pits league champions, Young Africans against Azam on Wednesday, 17 August 2016 in Dar es Salaam. (END)