In a surprising twist at Amahoro Stadium, Djibouti defeated Rwanda 1-0 in their first qualifying match for the 2024 CHAN tournament, thanks to a late goal from Gabriel Dadzie. This outcome has left Rwandan fans scratching their heads—after all, they were expecting to see their team soar, not take a nosedive!

Rwanda entered the match with high hopes, looking to build on their historical success against Djibouti, including a recent 9-0 victory in the CECAFA competition. Yet, despite playing on home turf, the “Amavubi Stars” found themselves stymied by a Djibouti side employing a solid defensive strategy. It seems Djibouti took a page out of the “How to Avoid Losing at Home” handbook, which they clearly didn’t pick up in the FIFA rankings!

From the outset, Rwanda aimed to score early, but their strikers struggled to convert chances against Djibouti’s solid defense and goalkeeper Sulait Luyima. Rwandan forwards like Muhire Kevin and Ruboneka Jean Bosco made valiant efforts, but their shots were more reminiscent of wayward darts than pinpoint arrows.

In the 30th minute, Djibouti came close to taking the lead, but Dadzie’s shot sailed over the bar, much to the relief of Rwandan fans who were probably thinking, “Well, at least we still have the snacks!” The first half ended without any goals, and the tension in the stadium was palpable.

As the second half kicked off, Amavubi coach Frank Spittler made tactical changes, substituting Niyibizi Ramadhan for Mugisha Gilbert. But in the 50th minute, Omborenga Fitina’s attempt to assist Gilbert Mugisha went awry, proving that sometimes passing is just as risky as taking a shot.

Despite several substitutions, Rwanda couldn’t crack Djibouti’s organized defense. Then came the turning point: in the 79th minute, Gabriel Dadzie scored for Djibouti, leaving Rwandan fans in shock. They must have felt like someone had switched the channel right before the final scene of their favorite show!

Rwanda nearly equalized in the 88th minute with a corner kick, but Ndayishimiye’s header hit the crossbar—talk about a close call! Djibouti pressed for a second goal but failed to capitalize, while the referee added four minutes of stoppage time, leaving fans with more suspense than a cliffhanger.

The return leg is set for October 31, 2024, at the same venue, where Rwandan fans will be hoping their team can bounce back and avoid any further shocks. The

winning team will advance to face the winner of the Kenya vs. South Sudan matchup in December.

As for Djibouti, they’ve proven that even the low-ranked can deliver a big surprise—just like the time your favorite uncle showed up to the family gathering in a clown costume!