

The future of Kenyan football hung in the balance as Harambee Stars prepared for a crucial double-header against Cameroon in the 2025 AFCON qualifiers. Former midfielder Taiwo Atieno, a veteran of past qualifying campaigns, weighed in on the team's chances and the challenges they faced.

Kenya, currently leading Group J with a narrow margin, needed a positive result against the mighty Indomitable Lions. Atieno stressed the importance of a well-organized defense, but also advocated for an attacking approach. He envisioned a 4-3-3 or an attacking 4-4-2 formation, utilizing wingers to create scoring opportunities.

"We need to be clinical in front of goal," Atieno emphasized. This resonated with fans who witnessed Kenya's struggles against Zimbabwe, where they failed to score. The recent victory against Namibia, fueled by goals from John Avire and Duke Abuya, offered a glimmer of hope.

However, Atieno lamented the lack of depth in the squad. He pointed out Kenya's overreliance on Michael Olunga, whose absence against Zimbabwe exposed their vulnerability. The golden age of Kenyan football, with stars like Dennis Oliech, McDonald Mariga, and Victor Wanyama, seemed like a distant memory.

"With a population of 55 million and a young demographic, we shouldn't be relying on one player," Atieno declared. He called for a renewed commitment to nurturing talent, a crucial step if Kenya was to compete on the continental stage.

Another hurdle loomed – the lack of a home stadium. Renovations at Kasarani and Nyayo Stadiums forced Kenya to play their "home" game against Cameroon in Uganda. Atieno expressed his disappointment. "Playing at home is crucial," he said, highlighting the importance of fan support. The absence of a FIFA-approved stadium, a problem plaguing a top-six African economy, added another layer of complexity to Kenya's quest for qualification.

As Kenya geared up for the crucial clash against Cameroon, Atieno's words served as a potent reminder of the team's potential and the challenges they needed to overcome.

For now, the future of Kenyan football hinged on their performance, their ability to find the net, and their commitment to developing the next generation of stars.