

***Stephen Constantine has returned to Rwanda's national team with a clear mission: Talent alone is not enough, commitment and performance will define the Amavubi.***

Like a builder returning to repair a structure he once helped raise, Stephen Constantine has returned to Rwanda's national team with a clear mission: to restore order, discipline, and pride to Amavubi. His message to players is equally straightforward, talent alone, or playing abroad, is not enough to earn a place on the team. Performance, commitment, and results must come first.

Constantine, who returns to coach Rwanda 11 years after his previous tenure, made his remarks during a press conference on Monday. He acknowledged that the team's performance has suffered since his departure in 2015, but he emphasized that dwelling on the past will not fix the present.

"I cannot say exactly why the results dropped after I left," he said. "But what I can say is that I'm here to correct it. It won't be easy, but we must find a way."

The coach made it clear that change will take time, but every moment counts.

"We have 24 hours in a day, and we must use them well," he said. "There's no looking back. We have to fight."

For Constantine, the foundation of a successful team is effort and dedication. Representing one's country is not just a privilege, it is a responsibility.

"Playing for your country is the greatest honor a player can have," he said. "That alone should be enough motivation to give everything on the pitch."

Fans should begin to see signs of improvement quickly, he added, though building a stronger national team is a process that will require patience.

"It won't change in one or two matches," he explained. "But you will see a team working much harder than it has in the last 10 or 12 games. That I can promise."

Constantine also challenged players to think about the bigger picture, qualifying for major tournaments like the Africa Cup of Nations or the World Cup is not just a personal goal, but a national one.

"Everyone wants to go to AFCON or the World Cup," he said. "But first we must ask

ourselves what we have done to get there.”

He stressed that being based abroad will not automatically guarantee selection.

“Playing outside Rwanda is not enough to earn a call-up to Amavubi,” Constantine said. “You must perform well and bring what the team needs.”

Ultimately, his objective is simple: winning. But achieving that will require a collective effort from players, staff, and the wider football community.

### **A Return Shadowed by History**

Constantine’s return comes with the weight of history. Eleven years ago, he left Amavubi in the aftermath of a scandal that shook Rwandan football. The team had been disqualified from the African Cup of Nations after striker Dady Birori, who also went by Tady Etekiama — was found to have used a different nationality and date of birth while playing for his club in Congo.

The Confederation of African Football (CAF) ruled that Birori was ineligible to play for Rwanda, disqualifying the team from the final qualifying round. At the time, CAF stated: *“The striker Dady Birori was ineligible to play for Rwanda and disqualified the country from the African Nations Cup qualifying competition for fielding him.”*

Birori, registered as Tady Etekiama at his club AS Vita, was banned pending a hearing to determine his sanction. The incident serves as a stark reminder of the importance of discipline, transparency, and accountability, principles Constantine is determined to enforce as he rebuilds Amavubi.

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