Independent presidential candidate Mpayimana Filippe has sparked debate with his proposal to reform Rwandan sports, including a name change for the national football team, the Amavubi (“Wasps”).

Filippe made the comments while campaigning in the eastern province. He highlighted the need to invest in sports development from the grassroots level, including funding for regular competitions at the sector level.

“There is a gap because we are not the first in our sector to use the competition in local competition, ” Filippe proposed on national television. “But the winning Cell does not get praise. You will not see Ronaldo or Mbappe who did not have a child who rose from the Cell.”

He emphasized the importance of budgeting for local competitions, which he believes are currently neglected by local leaders.

Filippe then turned to the national team, proposing a name change for the Amavubi. “When I get to the issue of sports,” he said, “I will also suggest that the name Amavubi be changed because at first Amavubi is not good [performs poorly]. We need a name that will make the country a serious team, like the Lion, the Elephant or even the Tiger.”

Filippe’s suggestion has ignited discussions online, with some supporting the idea of a more powerful mascot, while others value the tradition associated with the current name.

Mpayimana’s proposal comes within the context of Rwanda’s existing efforts to promote sports. National competitions like the Sector Kagame Cup and the Kagame Schools Cup provide platforms for talent development. These initiatives are further supported by sports federations and organizations like Isonga.