

Rayon Sports kicked off preparations for the new season in style with a convincing 2-0 victory over Kenyan giants Gor Mahia during the 2026 edition of Rayon Day at Kigali Pelé Stadium on Saturday.

The annual event, which officially unveiled the club's squad for the 2026/27 campaign, attracted thousands of supporters who turned the stadium into a sea of blue and white. Fans were treated to a lively pre-match ceremony featuring performances by Bull Dogg, Kitoko and Chorale de Kigali before the players were introduced one by one.

The festivities delayed kick-off by 45 minutes, but once the match got underway, Rayon Sports quickly showed they were ready for the new season.

The hosts looked sharper from the opening whistle and nearly took the lead early on when Guinean forward Issa Djiguiba struck the crossbar after capitalising on hesitation in the Gor Mahia defence.

The Kenyan side gradually settled into the contest and enjoyed more possession midway through the first half, but struggled to create clear chances against a disciplined Rayon backline.

Rayon coach made an early tactical change in the 27th minute, introducing former Mukura Victory Sports midfielder Iradukunda Elie Tatu in place of Boris Gbenou as the home side looked to regain control.

The breakthrough eventually arrived in first-half stoppage time.

Togolese striker Atisso Kodjo, one of Rayon Sports' marquee signings during the transfer window, finished off a well-worked move after being released by Mubarak Nizeyimana. The forward calmly rounded the goalkeeper before slotting into an empty net to hand the hosts a deserved lead heading into the break.

As expected in a pre-season fixture, the second half saw both teams make a series of substitutions.

Rayon handed valuable minutes to several new arrivals and fringe players, with goalkeeper Drissa Kouyate replacing Dande Junior while Nshuti Didier came into central defence. More changes followed after the hour mark as the coaching staff rotated the squad to assess different combinations ahead of the new campaign.

The substitutions briefly shifted momentum in Gor Mahia's favour. The Kenyan visitors enjoyed their best spell of the match and spent long periods in Rayon's half, but they failed to find the finishing touch despite their improved possession.

Instead, it was Rayon Sports who had the final say.

Deep into stoppage time, substitute Junior Kameni combined well with Tambwe Ngongo Gloire before setting up Fabio Nkundimana, who fired home Rayon's second goal to spark wild celebrations among the home supporters.

The 2-0 victory capped a memorable afternoon for the Blues and offered encouraging signs ahead of the new season, with several of the club's new signings making an immediate impact.

For Gor Mahia, the match provided another important test as they continue preparations for their own domestic, CECAFA Kagame Cup, and continental campaigns, but the Kenyan record champions were left frustrated by a well-organised Rayon side that looked clinical in front of goal.

The victory also gives Rayon momentum as they turn their focus to the 2026/27 season, but before that, they shift their attention to the 2026 CECAFA Kagame Cup, which Rwanda will host from 24 July to 7 August at Amahoro Stadium and Kigali Pelé Stadium.

The regional tournament will bring together 12 clubs from East and Central Africa, including APR FC, Gor Mahia, Simba SC, Vipers SC, Al Hilal, Al Merriekh and TP Mazembe, offering Rayon another opportunity to test themselves against some of the region's strongest sides ahead of the new campaign.

The CECAFA Kagame Cup will also serve as an important dress rehearsal for clubs preparing for the 2026/27 CAF Champions League and CAF Confederation Cup, both of which begin in September. Domestically, the 2026/27 Rwanda Premier League is expected to kick off in early August, shortly after the conclusion of the CECAFA Kagame Cup, with the official fixture list set to be released by the Rwanda Premier League and FERWAFU.