

*By Jeje Muhinde;*

Rwanda female referee Salima Mukansanga is set to make history as the first African female to be appointed for a men's World Cup after being named for the 2022 FIFA World Cup to be slated in the Qatar later in November.

Mukasanga will be among the three women appointed by FIFA; the other two are French Stephanie Frappart, and the Japanese Yoshimi Yamashit.

The Rwandan ref, who earlier in January this year, made history as the first female referee to officiate at the Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) tournament is among six female officials selected among the final list of referees, assistant referees and VAR referees for the competition.

She would go on to handle one of the Group B final games between Zimbabwe and Guinea.

The other assistants who will be in Qatar include the Brazilian assistants Neuza Back, the Mexican Karen Díaz Medina and the American Kathryn Nesbittwill make history in Qatar 2022, as it will be the first time that there are female referees in a men's World Cup, according to the list of referees announced by FIFA.

Mukansanga and the other five females could make further history depending on their performance in the final assessment and build-up to the tournament which kicks off on November 21.

Though their selection among the final list is no guarantee that they will actually officiate a game at the World Cup, it is still historic given that it is the first time in the 92-year-old history of the World Cup, that female referees have a chance to take charge of men's World Cup finals

According to the chairman of the FIFA referees committee Pierluigi Collina, the decision to include females in the team of match officials heading for the World Cup is the outcome of a process that began long ago to select the very best of the best for competitions.

"This concludes a long process that began several years ago with the deployment of female referees at FIFA men's junior and senior tournaments," he said.

"In this way, we clearly emphasise that it is quality that counts for us and not

gender,” the famed former FIFA Referee, Collina explained.

Thirty-three-year-old Mukansanga, a FIFA badge holder, is becoming a trailblazer among the Knights of the Whistle.

She would go on to handle one of the Group B final games between Zimbabwe and Guinea.

The Rwandan was one of four women named among the 26 referees named for the competition, making it on the final list together with Carine Atemzabong, Fatiha Jermoumi and Bouchra Karboubi.

Before the AFCON 2021, Mukansanga who has fast risen to be among the best referees on the continent, also officiated at the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo, as well as the 2019 Women’s World Cup in France.

In 2018, she was among the referees selected for the Africa Women’s Cup of Nations staged in Ghana.