Most football clubs in Rwanda survive with difficulties paying wages or signing new players due to financial instability. Now, Rubavu district authorities blame poor performance of many football clubs on financial instabilities.The bad situation in this sport is largely caused by lack of funding or sponsorship which put most clubs in a terrible situation, but this is likely to change with Etincelles FC.

In the 2023/24 season that began in August, Etincelles FC, a club founded by tea farmers in Pfunda and sponsored by fans and Rubavu district, has put in place strategies to remain financially sound.

Prior to the start of the season, the Rubavu-based side received a sponsorship budget package of Rwf 120 million ($US 97,569) from the district. The district contributes 50% to the budget of the club representing Rubavu town.

The club intends to raise more funding through fundraising, seasonal tickets, sponsorship deals, donations, gate collections and the sale of club merchandise.

According to Mayor Deogratias Nzabonimpa of Rubavu district, most clubs in the country fail to perform well because players and coaches are not paid their wages on time.

To assist the club ensure that it remains expanding on its network of partners, district authorities have revealed that they will assist the club to expand its next work partners first, to launch fundraising to raise funds from well-wishers.

In addition, the district affirmed that it will further assist the club in signing a partnership deal with Pfunda tea plantation where the club can promote tea company activities.

Etincelles FC will be able to see Pfunda tea products during games and training sessions.

Apart from the pursuit of excellence in the commercial realm as one of the local clubs with attractive sports brands, the Rubavu-based side can also realize exponential growth while fueling its dreams both on and off the pitch.

Despite finishing 7th last season, both management and the district note that fans also need to be educated about the culture and importance of supporting the club.

“Instead of just asking the club for results without donating anything, fans should

ask “what can we do for the club? We need to organize a campaign to reach out to every fan.” The district authority points out.

The authorities’ regard club fans as important not only for boosting players’ morale and confidence, but also for bringing in revenue.

In March this year, the club management introduced a new digital platform to allow supporters to register and pay their membership fees.

The platform which is aimed at raising revenues and recording club fans in the country was signed with Esicia Ltd, a Rwandan-based company that specializes in software development and system integration.

“We are trying to reach out to every Etincelles fan countrywide and request them to register on this platform,” Thabit Habineza, club Executive Committee member said.

By categorizing its supporters, monitoring their contributions, and making contributions easy wherever they are, the club hopes to be able to better serve its fans.

As part of the club’s plans, Rubavu will introduce a season-ticketing system, where supporters can buy tickets for the entire season online.

Highlights for Etincelles FC

Founded by tea farmers at Pfunda in 1962, Etincelles FC is one of the oldest football clubs in Rwanda.

The last time the club topped the Rwanda league table was back in 2009 when they went on to finish 3rd but later upgraded to second place after Atraco FC withdrew from the league.

The Rubavu-based club made a comeback to the African scene in nearly 12 years of absence in 1989, they featured in the CAF Cup Winners Cup, losing to Vital’O of Burundi 2-1 aggregate.

In 2011, the club was eliminated from the CAF Confederation Cup after drawing 1-1 all (3-1 on aggre) with Congo Brazzaville’s AC Leopards at Umuganda stadium in Rubavu.