It remains the case, as it has been for some years now, that the Rwandan football clubs will not have a representative in the Group stage of any CAF Competitions yet again, after APR FC and Rayon Sports were knocked out.

Just when you thought you had a handle on things, Pyramids FC of Egypt upped the ludicrousness. They walloped APR FC 6-1 away in Cairo on Friday. The first leg ended goalless.

With the benefit of the floods in Libya which meant both legs had to be played in Rwanda as agreed, Rayon lost 4-2 on penalties to Al Hilal Benghazi. The first leg ended 1-1

The last Rwandan club to reach the CAF Confederation Cup Group stage was Rayon in 2018. Since then, teams are scratching their heads. That failure as well has weakened the national teams.

Some fundamental problems with Rwandan football clubs are cyclical, and they are unlikely to change anytime soon and it’s not hard to see why.

The question lingers: what are the possible reasons for fading away at early stages in the CAF competitions? Well, every other reason is attached to it. It is just one single reason.

As it appears, Rwandan Premier Football clubs tend to shy away from the fact that they do not periodize or set clear strategic objectives.

In the last ten years, the Army side has cultivated a talent pool that is 100 percent nationalistic. They opted to field only Rwandan citizens hoping to build success from local talent alone.

Luckily they shined, winning 7 league titles and two Peace Cup trophies, however it was a scattergun approach to the continental level. They continued to be knocked out of CAF competitions leaving the fans disheartened.

This season, they changed their strategy to include foreign players. They unveiled more than 9 new faces, including Ismael Nshimirimana, Taddeo Lwanga, Danny Ndikumana and Sudanese midfielder Sharaf Shaiboub.

Barely two months into the league, the club quickly hoped for good results, forgetting the unspoken truth about the looming concern of the new signings not

being that good.

In contrast, teams like Pyramids FC, El Zamalek Egypt or Al Ahly are ranked as the best in Africa because they clearly have strategic objectives on what they want in Africa.

In the last five years, Pyramids reached the final of the 2019/2020 CAF Confederation Cup but lost 1-0 to RS Berkane of Morocco.

Also they played in the semifinals of the same competition in the 2020/21 season and the quarter finals during the 2021/22 season.

TP Mazembe, the Congo DR side has been a constant feature of the competition.

Rwandan teams lack sincerity of purpose in their recruitment approach from head coaches to players. Their methods, channels, and tactics to identify and attract potential players**,** is still rated very poor.

They say ‘Old habits die hard’. As one of my colleagues suggested at the end of each season, a club like Rayon or Kiyovu sends the coach packing, in most cases ending up in dispute at FIFA because they fired him without compensation.
Then the new coach comes in with new signings which take them backwards each season.

In football criteria, hiring a good technical team requires resources which do not come easily unless the club has a sugar daddy with deep pockets.

For example, a club like Pyramid FC has a technical coach crew of more than 3 coaches and each has his own role. As a result, they create a philosophy that defines how the team plays.

Such coaches have tangible and lasting value for the team. In Rwanda we don’t have anything like that.

Another example is that of Coach Jaime Pacheco who joined Pyramids FC in January. Besides playing in the World Cup, the Portuguese gaffer is not strange to Egyptian football, previously also handled Zamalek, Boavista, Real Mallorca, Al Shabab and Beijing Guoan F.C to mention but a few.

His biggest achievement came when he led the Os Axadrezados to the Portuguese

league title in 2001, becoming the last club from outside the top three to win the title.

In Rwanda, clubs must recruit adaptive players, players within a specific age range (not too young or too old).

Clubs like APR or Rayon need a combination of players, with talent and experience which also turns out to be good for the national team. .

Pyramids FC had undoubtedly a more gifted squad against APR FC. The world of football knows Sobhi 26, a left winger with offensive capabilities.

The 26-year-old forward previously played for Stoke City and Huddersfield Town in the Premier League. Stats show that he has played more than 101 games for the club, scoring 29 goals and providing 20 assists. Without doubt he is an outstanding player that any team in Rwanda would love to sign.

Other players include Fiston Kalala Mayele the DR Congo forward who in July signed a 3-year deal to join Pyramids FC from Tanzanian champions Young African

Also having money is also very important for clubs to recruit players. Clubs from North African states have more experienced players because they can afford to pay wages and other benefits.

Stat records show Fiston netted 16 goals in 24 games during the 2022/23 season. He was awarded the top-scorer golden boot after scoring 11 goals which inspired Yanga FC to the finals last season eventually losing to Algerian side USM Alger.

As the saying goes, ‘You reap what you sow’ Rwandan clubs ought to spend if they want to reach far in the CAF Champions League.

Clubs like TP Mazembe, Pyramids FC or Mamelodi Sundowns ***FC*** spend during transfers because the owners have the funds.

Pyramids FC for instance, paid a whopping £5 million to sign Sobhi from Huddersfield Town in 2020 and spent another $1 million on the Congolese. Fiston.

With all sincerity, money plays a huge role in modern day football. Teams from North African states spend and have financial capacity, a reason why they are always ranked top in Africa.

The only good thing about clubs in Rwanda is that we have abundant talents waiting to be nurtured into stardom,

At the moment at least, Rwandan clubs do not appear to have a clearly defined strategic objective of what they want to achieve in Africa beyond mouthing the slogan of ‘playing continental’. Until they do, this abysmal state of affairs will continue