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Match build up; are the black lions of Ethiopia ready to maul Zambia?

(By Getahune Bekele, Nelspruit- South Africa.)

Despite the annoying mannerism of Ethiopian Football Association boss and top TPLF cadre Sahilu Gebremariam who prevented the players from meeting their passionate fans at the Oliver Tambo air port in Johannesburg on Friday afternoon, the colorful country men and women are streaming to the city of Nelspruit for Monday's crunch battle against Zambia.



Will classy goal poacher Saladin said, leader of the pride Degu Debebe, power house Yared Zenabu and the inspirational Adane Girma catapult Ethiopia, the 1957 runners up and the 1962 winners to glory?

Although it is unfair to compare the current crop of players to the 1962 intrepid soldiers of the lion of Judah, they do have what it takes to bring back the glory days of yester year soccer.

We are told that the free kick specialist of the black lions who can bend it like David Beckham is defender Abebaw Butako with Saladin deputizing to take those around the 18 yard area.

Fuad Ibrahim of Minnesota stars in the US is aiming high to share the goal scoring responsibility with Saladin. Dangerous crosses expected to come from the man known for his electrifying pace, Yusuf Saleh of Syrianska club in Sweden.

Our goal keeper, the proven shot stopper Sisaye Banacha will be well protected by the likes of Biadgelegn Elias, Aynalem Hailu, Asrat Megersa, Alula Girma and co while the acrobatic coffee goal minder Jemal Tassew waits on the wings to grab his chance if Banacha fails to stay switched on for the crucial 90 minutes against the Zambians.

When the black lions win a corner kick, the imposing Adane Girma and yared Zinabu will pose a serious aerial treat to the solid but aging Zambian defense.

Furthermore, the match against the copper bullets will give black lions Coach Sewnet 'Mourinho' Bishaw a chance to outsmart and outfox the more experienced Zambian French Coach.

Moreover, it must be a huge relief for Sewnet Bishaw that the heart and soul of Zambian team, the 26 year old England bound TP Mazembe star Rainfor Kalaba is still nursing a hamstring injury. The rumor is he will start on the bench.

However, Sewnet still must find answers on how to stop the powerful but cumbersome Zambian front man Collins Mbesuma who plays for South African premier league side Orlando Pirates.

Leaving him one on one with Degu Debebe will be a fatal error. We hope the equally powerful black lion Yared Zinabu would cut the supply line with our goal keeper doubling up as sweeper to clear long balls landing behind our defense for Mbesuma and England premier league player Emmanuel Mayuka to chase.

Sewnet Bishaw also needs to stifle the Katongo brothers; Felix and Christopher in order to win the match convincingly.

With 20 of our 23 boys playing their club foot ball on home soil, Zambian Coach might fancy an easy win thinking that the tactical and technical ability of his overseas players will freeze the Ethiopians.

Nevertheless, Ethiopia has one more triumph card that can hugely influence the outcome of the encounter, the supporters!

“Tekebresh Yenorshiw babatochachin Dem” and “Endet Yeresal” will be reverberating in the stands with no federal police watching who sings what.

Go black lions go!

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