



MY EXPERIENCE OF BRINGING SPORT PSYCHOLOGY TO CRICKET UGANDA

Greetings to you all. It's an honour to pen down my experience so far with Cricket Uganda. I am Edgar Kazibwe, a passionate fellow about Sport Psychology just like you. I am based in the heart of Uganda's capital, Kampala in East Africa. It's been a beautiful journey with this kind of work so far.

Some days I envisage making a bigger impact that may spring a huge revolution in the Ugandan sports world, however, that may take some time. Anyway, settling down with the fact that I was going to be working with Cricket Uganda and the national team kept me intrigued.

The first time I was briefed that I would be working with Cricket Uganda was quite a huge revelation. I still remember opening that email on a Thursday evening. All that could run through my mind was being ready at all costs. Making sure I deliver at whatever activities I was going to get involved in.

The previous weekend or so, I had spent some time on a road trip with a couple of friends across town. Just before we could switch on the car radio to listen to BBC Sports World, a popular broadcast for Sport die-hards here, we were interestingly talking Sport Psychology.

We even joked how I - perhaps after my highly valuable Optimise Potential/equitysport mentorship with Hannah Stoyel - would help out Cricket. We had chatted on how much the sport needed help with the mental aspect of the game.

One of the stories had us talk up the Impact of a Sport Psychologist, the one time he was invited to engage with the national men's cricket team ahead of a highly billed game back in the day. His impact is still revered to date as one of the major influences that delivered Uganda's opening win in that tournament.

To be sincere, from the top of the administration at Cricket Uganda to the rookie, the need for a Sport Psychologist is evident and their role in an athlete's life is appreciated. From the phone calls to actual meetings with the leaders of the Uganda Cricket Federation (UCA) the opportunity at hand is not taken for granted.

Back at other my work where I engage with my colleagues at the news desk, expectations are also high. With basic information from the internet, they have been writing articles to shine alight on how 'blessed' the Cricket Federation is after securing the services of a Sport Psychologist.

So far, I have been able to engage with a host of stakeholders since the announcement of the mentorship-practice relationship with Cricket Uganda. I have had sessions with the coaches and officials on what I am bringing on board and how I will be of help to the teams and players.

The reception has been warm. This is the first time the federation is working with a Sport Psychologist on a more extensive basis and all I feel is a deep hunger from every individual to collect as much to make the different outfits better.

At one moment I was even told how the "hopes of several Ugandans" would lie on my shoulders. My initial perception was of how much change was anticipated once I dived in the thick of things. However, a second thought gave me another view of perhaps how much belief they hold on Sport Psychology's relevance in Cricket.

Over this period of time one of the major challenges that continues to linger is the learning disparity formed due to differences in educational backgrounds on different levels. Talent may not know background but skill acquisition might thrive on more enlightened and academically well-founded individuals.

Uganda is classified into many backgrounds and with global statistics showing the East African country as one of the most comfortable homes of refugees from the region and abroad, a multi-lingual society has further been built on top of basic tribe denominations. This has trickled down to communication challenges, a challenge that still affects a host of sporting environments.

Lastly, most sportspeople are yet to hugely benefit from sport because it hasn't yet brought meaningful returns in most especially those aside from football. These games are quite not among the top priorities with regard to Government policy and this directly affects the resources pool for affording services delivered by professionals like Sport Psychologists, nutritionists and many others.

In a nutshell, the field of Sport Psychology in Uganda has a lot of room to grow and pioneering with Cricket Uganda is already drawing positive reviews. Despite the fact that challenges may arise once in a while trying to achieve, and the anticipation of building better sport personalities keeps the motivation sky high.

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