



TableTennisAfrica



Table Tennis Africa is a quarterly publication of African Table Tennis Federation

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PRESIDENT'S REMARKS



I AM delighted to welcome everyone into 2021 and hope that we are all keeping safe from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Alongside the rest of the sporting world, table tennis competitions and related activities have been hugely hampered by COVID-19. However, we

take solace in the fact that scientists are coming up with effective solutions that should help to get humanity going again.

With several vaccines now available against the coronavirus, we are confident that sooner than later, we would all savour the joy of taking to the table to play table tennis in the usual convivial settings under which we competed at national, regional, continental and global tournaments before the pandemic struck.

I therefore, urge you all to persevere, and not despair, under the current inhibitions imposed on our sport by the pandemic. Victory is in sight!

In the mean time, here is the maiden edition of Table Tennis Africa, our Association's quarterly newsletter devoted to capturing table tennis events and allied activities within the continent and the world at large.

Anchored by our media officer, players, fans, officials and other stakeholders in the African table tennis family can expect a rich diet of tournament coverage, players' features and related table tennis information on the pages of the Table Tennis Africa newsletter.

I hope you'll enjoy this first serve of the newsletter.

Permit me to disclose that our schedule of activities for 2021 is yet to be released as we await final confirmation from the assigned host Associations towards precaution arrangements and protocols for Covid-19 and final approval from ITTF. We shall send the schedule to all national associations as soon as it is confirmed by the ITTF.

Meanwhile, I ask you all to continue to observe all COVID-19 protocols as directed by the authorities in your country of residence.

Please keep safe from the pandemic so that we can all meet again in the spirit of our beloved sport - Table Tennis.

See you soon!

Khaled El-Salhy

President, African Table Tennis Federation

Saleh: Still Up For The Game at 41



AT 41, Egypt's Ahmed Saleh is an African table tennis veteran and no one would have grudged him if he had opted to call it quits with the game before now.

But the pleasant problem we have on our hands right now is that the Egyptian veteran is not ready to throw in the towel right yet. In fact - and to the delight of fans - the ageless Saleh continues to wax stronger in the game in what should be the twilight of his illustrious career.

Saleh is a veteran of many table tennis battles on the continent and beyond. In the course of his long career he had conquered many foes and laid down indelible markers in the game.

Many of his contemporaries had long waved bye to the sport as active participants. But Saleh is defying the odds and offering the sport an encore.

In a development that is akin to turning back the hands of time, Saleh shot up 28 places from 78 spot to 50 in the December 2020 ITTF ranking released by the world body! The former African champion became the best mover in the world with this feat in the men's rating.

Saleh is highly regarded as one of the few highly skilful table tennis players in Africa. The physical strength of his youth may have dropped a notch or two but Saleh makes up for this with a deep bag of experience and rock-like mental strength. These continue to serve him well against younger players on the continent and abroad.

Saleh draws strength from these and fancies that the present crop of players buckle at the knees against him when these play in their minds.

The Egyptian had said he would continue to play as long as his body could carry him. This he has shown again with his display at the 2020 World Cup and WTT in China.

A role model for upcoming players in Africa, Saleh may be included in the Egyptian team to the Tokyo 2021 Olympic Games based on his experience.

If he makes it to Tokyo, the World would again be thrilled by the table skills of the tireless war horse Saleh.

Those who had seen him in full flight as a player and who had experienced the joy in this legend's mesmerising play look forward to that titillating possibility at Tokyo 2021.



Excitement envelops Africa over Durban 2023

EXACTLY 81 years after an African nation hosted the ITTF World Championships, Cairo in 1939, the prestigious tournament returns to the continent for the second time; Durban is named as the host of the 2023 edition. The African Table Tennis Federation (ATTF) described the award as a deserved honour for Africa.

Khaled El-Salhy, ATTF President, was a happy man on Monday 28th September when the city of Durban was declared as host.

"I am extremely happy and honoured that my continent "Africa" will host the biggest table tennis event in 2023 after the same event took place in Cairo, Egypt in 1939.

"I was not surprised with the overwhelming support given to South Africa during the voting exercise. It is not only from our family in Africa but from all over the world due to the modest presentation from SATTB coupled with trust that it is time now for Africa to host such World title events. I think we deserve it in Africa and we have full respect for Germany with the near perfect presentation."

"This is also a big honour for all Africans especially the ATTF Executive Committee and all who are part of the dream to be part of the historic moment."

"I am full of confidence that 2023 WTTC in Durban, South Africa will be a fantastic event organised professionally with unique African flavour. Let us not all forget that South Africa already hosted the Football World Cup successfully in 2010 and South Africa Table Tennis Board (SATTB) had hosted several international and continental events successfully in the last 20 years," said Khaled El-Salhy.

An excited SATTB President, Joe Carrim believes the staging of the tournament would help to ignite interest in the sport.

"The staging of the World Championships in 2023 is an opportunity to showcase table tennis to all South Africans whilst sharing a beautiful part of our country

with the world. Winning this bid is also a tribute to our former leaders during and after the struggle for our liberation, most notably Mr Cassim Bassa and Dr Errol Vawda, both from the City of Durban.

"The hosting will help to professionalise the sport in South Africa. Establish academies in at least four provinces. Establish a high altitude training centre in Lesotho. Have a sponsored regional circuit in place to ensure athlete development as global competitors.

"The vote is an endorsement of the new ITTF vision. It is the beginning of the transformation process within the ITTF. This majority vote in the face of a very determined bid by Germany reinforces our belief in our ability to host a championship that will linger in the minds of all participants as the most unique experience."

"The portrayal of African unity brought joy to my heart. We have consistently spoken about the need to stand united and we have seen this emerge with the development of a continental strategic plan recognising the need to constantly shape and use the strategy as a road map for continuous growth and development.

"I am a proud father looking at a bright future and feeling blessed that we are presented with an opportunity to leave a lasting legacy for future generations," added Joe Carrim.

Likewise, Andrew Mudibo, the President of Eastern Africa region, was delighted with the level of trust shown to South Africa.

"I think the world united in voting for Africa and the win by Durban reminds us of when the 2010 FIFA World Cup hosted in South Africa. The support given shows that table tennis as a sport is ready to grow and compete with the rest of the international sports in the world.

"With the event taking place in South Africa, all eyes will be on Africa to see if we are able to organize and host a world class event. I am confident South Africa will put up a show that will not only make Africa proud but the

whole world."

"The staging of the event in Durban, South Africa is an opportunity for Africa to exploit and grow the sport of table tennis in each region and country. African nations should tap into the success of the event so that the sport of table tennis can stop to be looked at as a minor sport in Africa."

"Africa must also learn how to organize world class events and must support the SATTB in any way possible as this is our event and we must show the world how we host people. The trust that has been bestowed on South Africa during the recently concluded ITTF AGM is a positive step in making sure that table tennis reaches and is played in each part of the world," said Andrew Mudibo.

Also, Professor Germain Karou, the President of Cote d'Ivoire Table Tennis Federation and Secretary General of West Africa region, Professor Germain was clear that past experience was a major factor:

"South Africa's capacity to host and organise this competition as a country has shown with the FIFA World Cup. Also, this is another chance to honour the African continent that had not yet had the privilege that other continents have had in staging such tournaments. I must also commend the massive support from the continent," said Germain Karou.

Positive responses, it was the same from Lotfi Guerfel, President of the Tunisia Table Tennis Federation.

"I would link to congratulate South Africa for being honoured to host the 2023 World Championships and to thank ITTF and all countries for their overwhelming support given to South Africa during the voting exercise. As President of the Tunisian Table Tennis Federation, I'm feeling honoured, proud, because supporting South Africa is in fact a great contribution to develop and promote table tennis in African continent.

"Africa should rally support for South Africa to stage a befitting tournament. This will be through collaboration and sharing experience in organising such big events. The organisation committee of Junior World Championship 2022 in Tunisia will have a great pleasure to include guest members from South Africa and later to share with them its experience and evaluation of the championships' success.

The Golden Rules

THE SERVICE

- 2.6.1 Service shall start with the ball resting freely on the open palm of the server's stationary free hand.
- 2.6.2 The server shall then project the ball near vertically upwards, without imparting spin, so that it rises at least 16cm after leaving the palm of the free hand and then falls without touching anything before being struck.

2020 ITTF Handbook for Match Officials: <https://www.ittf.com/handbook/>

Tip 1: This means it must rise within a few degrees of the vertical, rather than within the angle of 45° that was formerly specified, and that it must rise far enough for the umpire to be sure that it is thrown upwards and not sideways or diagonally.

Tip 2: The lower limit of 16cm is just greater than the height of the net, which provides a convenient reference.

Note:

During service, the ball must be above the level of the playing surface and be clearly visible to the receiver, the umpire and the assistant umpire.

By Genevieve Lentz
ITTF Referee



Speaking from Doha, Qatar: ITTF Deputy President Khalil Al-Mohannadi, ITTF Executive Vice President of Finance Petra Sörling, ITTF CEO Steve Dainton, ITTF Secretary General Raul Calin, ITTF Chief Financial Officer Michael Brown and ITTF Member Relations Director Mounir Bessah.



Kenyan computer scientist in search of global glory

JOSIAH Wandera may not be a popular sportsperson in Kenya; yet the national number two table tennis star is not ready to give up on his ambition of making a name for himself in the sport.

The University of Nairobi Computer Science graduate is aiming to replicate his regional exploits at international level.

A late starter, Josiah Wandera's interest in table tennis started as a student at Musingu High School in 2008.

Although table tennis was not that popular in the school, the college being famous for its exploits in rugby and football, the young Wandera was encouraged to play table tennis by a fellow student who had played for Kenya while still in school.

As highlighted in an article published in the Star of Kenya on Monday 2nd November, Wandera is eager to take his skills to global level.

The reigning Zambia Chinese Ambassadors Cup champion has been working to fine-tune his tactics with the aim of testing the waters at International level.

A member of the four-man Kenyan team that featured in the 2020 ITTF Africa Olympics Qualifiers held at the Olympique de Rades multi-purpose gymnasium in Tunis was also part of the team that competed at the 2019 African Games in Rabat, Morocco following his dominance at national level in Kenya.

"It reaches a time in one's career when you feel you need a fresh impetus into your sporting career. After the qualifiers in Tunis, I have targeted to perform well at International level because I feel there is nothing left for me to prove at regional level," said Wandera.

"I have won many local events and taking it outside the country would be a great pleasure," he added.

Wandera hopes to improve his sporting career alongside raising his professional skills in the computer trade.

The soft-spoken player may not be able to join the league of African stars like Quadri Aruna of Nigeria and Egypt's Assar Omar; but he is ready to learn from their flourishing skills.

"The standards of the game at continental level are honestly way above what Kenya has to offer at the present but again as the old Chinese adage goes, a journey of a thousand miles will always start with a single step. At least, we are making good progress in Kenya."

"My computer science bit is as demanding as knocking balls on the table. It entails networking, programming and software development. I have always been a fan of computers as it's a generational thing. Recently, I have developed keen interest in reading psychology books to deliberately sharpen my way of thinking and to try to be logical. This has immensely improved the way I interact. I realised I had an introverted behaviour."

If not playing table tennis, Wandera relishes a decent side hustle. "I do websites and develop mobile Apps as a freelancer as I continue seeking a permanent job."

"Table tennis for me has been a way of living. It has helped me keep my mental health in check during some of the most difficult times in my life and on several occasions, I have been lucky to win honours thus cushioning me financially even if it's just for a moment.

"In France, there was the clear factor of overall improvement in my table tennis skills but for that to happen, I had to completely change some of the techniques I was used

to.

"But more importantly, I felt like my mental strength had improved significantly and this helped me not just in table tennis but also in other areas of life. I was taught patience, persistence and understanding.

"I was taught I won't always lead in matches or win them for that matter but how I get back after losing is crucial as well. Coming to table tennis and computer science, I just have to try and find a balance between the two. All work and no play makes you dull, right?"

"It's a clear message that one can actually excel in both and the existence of one doesn't mean sacrificing the other."

"While training, I interacted with a lot of players who were playing in the French League at the time and the experience was amazing.

"I got to play some handicap matches, where you give points to your opponent and start from behind. In one of the handicap matches, I played and reached the finals where I gave my opponent a 16-0 advantage and I had to try and play catch up. My opponent won the match 36-32."

Wandera still has a lot of plans in table tennis. "Short term, I intend to fight for my place in the Kenya national team and much improved performances in tournaments abroad. Long term, I would want to disseminate what I have been learning over the years to the upcoming junior players," Wandera said.

Wandera became the third player to attend a month-long training program in Paris, France.

"In Paris, I met the coach on Day One for an introductory phase of training. Thereafter, I played some few games just for him to get to see and analyse my style of play, weak points and strengths. Then he mentioned them to me later after that first session. A lot of multi-balls and footwork training was also part of the scheduled programme and this went on for a period of a month. I learnt a lot, from table work to the mental aspect of the game. One of the most stressed out issues was patience. So all these skills and more is what I have loved to share with not only my teammates but the Kenyan table tennis community as a whole, for us to move forward as one.

Wandera says that time keeping in sport is of essence. "It's always important to have a schedule and stick to it. If you say you want an hour per day for just training on services then adhere to that. Another thing is being attentive."

Name: Josiah Obai Wandera
Date of birth: 05.12.1992
Hometown: Sio-Port, Busia
Residence: Nairobi
Occupation: Computer Scientist
National team debut: All Africa Games 2015
Hobbies: Bike riding
First Club: City Club
Previous Clubs: None
2020 goal: Olympics qualification
Greatest TT player: Zhang Jike
Favourite Local player: Brian Mutua
Playing style: Offensive
Marital status: Single
Family: 2 sisters 1 brother
Occupation: Currently interning at Twaweza East Africa
2021 goal: Haven't set any goals yet






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African stars relish Restart experience in China

THEY are considered two of the best players from Africa and they have continued to prove their mettle with performances on the global stage.

Nigeria's Quadri Aruna and Egypt's Dina Meshref featured in the recent ITTF Restart tournaments staged in China.

Aruna competed in the Dishang 2020 ITTF Men's World Cup and Bank of Communications ITTF Finals; Meshref in the Dishang 2020 ITTF Women's World Cup, Weihai and Zhengzhou being the respective destinations.

They were two of the three players from Africa on duty in China, the other being Ahmed Ali Saleh, from Egypt.

Despite not making it beyond the preliminary round at the World Cup and first round at the ITTF Finals, Aruna enjoyed every moment he spent on the return to international tournament.

"I'm very happy and excited to be here after about eight months. Everyone really wants to play here and I must say thank you to China for giving us this opportunity to restart again. For me, it's my first time playing in the ITTF Finals and I feel fulfilled and excited because I have never qualified to play in the Finals. Playing in this tournament is like a dream come true," said Aruna.

He described China as a familiar scene for him.

"I played here like three times at different tournaments, so I'm actually used to conditions here in China and I'm always happy to come here to play. I feel happy to be here," added Aruna.

Like Aruna, Meshref believes the chance to compete again at international level was a rare opportunity which she cherished.

"I was very happy to get the chance to compete again. I really enjoyed the experience. However, it was a bit difficult and different from the other competitions we used to play as we had to do several quarantines before the competition. Also, we weren't allowed to get out of the "bubble" which was also a different and new experience. The Chinese were very helpful and friendly, while the reception was perfect. Everything was so well organized," said Meshref.



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Technical Director, NTTF, Adesoji Tayo (left), Ex-President, NTTF, Wahid Enitan Oshodi; Ogunkunle; Obazuaye, Second Vice President, NTTF, Alderson Bankole; Para Table Tennis coach, Sunday Odebode and Mr. Shola of NTTF

Quadri Aruna lifts Nigerian Paralympians in Tokyo medal bid

ANNUALLY, Nigeria's Quadri Aruna visits a local orphanage; in addition, this year on Tuesday 15th December in Lagos, he presented two members of the National Paralympic Team with equipment. Isau Ogunkunle and Faith Obazuaye were the fortunate recipients of goods totalling 1,370 Euros.

Aruna explained the gesture was borne out of his resolve to give back to society, especially to the Paralympians that have been making the country proud despite the challenges faced.

"On behalf of myself and Aruna Sports Shop, we are always happy to support athletes in Nigeria and this is a way of giving back. Having experienced the same kind of support in my first Olympic Games in London 2012. I think it is very important to support the Paralympians as well, who have been doing the country proud for

decades. I hope this support will motivate them and help them to do much better in Tokyo, Japan." Quadri Aruna

Alderson Bankole, second Vice President of the Nigeria Table Tennis Federation was most appreciative.

"I am personally impressed with the gesture of Aruna who is fond of thinking about others and I believe other top players should take a cue from this. I believe this will go a long way in motivating the athletes to aim high at Tokyo. I commend him and I look forward to a good performance from the athletes at Tokyo." Alderson Bankole

Similarly, in his remarks, Adesoji Tayo, the Technical Director, was full of praise for the generous gesture.

"I am aware that Aruna has been doing a lot for young players and

for him to also remember our Paralympians is inspiring for most of us. I believe he will continue to grow from strength to strength in his endeavours. Others should emulate him and I hope the players will see this gesture as a motivating factor to excel to Tokyo," said Adesoji Tayo.

National Para table tennis coach Sunday Odebode was understandably delighted and saw the donation as a major motivating factor.

"I hope and believe this will help the players to focus more in training and excel at Tokyo," said Sunday Odebode.

Ogunkunle and Obazuaye are African champions in class four and 10 respectively, Obazuaye is also a silver medalist at 2018 Commonwealth Games in Australia and they will be making their Paralympic Games debut in Tokyo.

Top 20 African Men's Ranking

ARUNA Quadri	NGR	AGBETOGLO Mawussi	TOG
ASSAR Omar	EGY	EL-BEIALI Mohamed	EGY
SALEH Ahmed	EGY	HMAM Adam	TUN
DIAW Ibrahim	SEN	ABDEL-AZIZ Youssef	EGY
OMOTAYO Olajide	NGR	FANNY Kokou Dodji	TOG
ASSAR Khalid	EGY	LINGEVELDT Kurt	RSA
IDOWU Saheed	CGO	KASSA Gedeon	COD
ABIODUN Bode	NGR	ANTONIO Alessio	ANG
KHEROUF Sami	ALG	CHANYOOK FO Brian	MRI
TORIOLA Segun	NGR	BOURIAH Larbi	ALG

Top 20 African Women's Ranking

MESHREF Dina	EGY	OJOMU Ajoke	NGR
HELMY Yousra	EGY	MOOKREY Simeen	RSA
EDEM Offiong	NGR	SAIDANI Safa	TUN
HANFFOU Sarah	CMR	PATEL Danisha	RSA
EL-ERAKY Reem	EGY	JALIM Nandeshwaree	MRI
ABDEL-AZIZ Farah	EGY	YOUSRY Amira	EGY
KESSACI Katia	ALG	NZANGANI Cyntia	COD
OSHONAIKE Olufunke	NGR	KINOO Ruqayyah	MRI
LOGHRAIBI Lynda	ALG	HOSENALLY Oumehani	MRI
GARCI Fadwa	TUN	LAGSIR Sannah	ALG