

The case for the National Team Name: Walia or Black Lions?

First of all I congratulate Ethiopian football team and the entire football family for their performance. Well done. I salute you.

Here we go after a glorious fight we are packing our bags to return back home. Here we have definitely lost the battle not the war. Our boys make us proud and keep our heads up. We know from their performance what will come tomorrow. Our boys' fight resembles the lion's fight in the jungle, even sometimes the king of the jungle losses against the hyenas; he remains the king of the jungle that is who our boys are.

When we look at the last 30 years, Ethiopian football has come a long way. It is not easy for us to be at this stage whereby our recent history has been associated with bombs not balls. For the last few decades let alone being competitive on the world stage, the Ethiopian youth never had a chance to grow up into adulthood. It is not a long ago our brothers and sisters were slot like animals on the streets of Addis Ababa and all over Ethiopia by the name of revolution and counter revolution. It is not a distant memory that our brothers and sisters conscripted for endless civil war from South to North and from East to West. We had been through the hill.

Even if I cannot say that we are in our best time, we Ethiopians have relative peace and prosperity. That peace and prosperity has created a fertile ground for us to be what we are today, my wish and pray is to keep our relative peace and prosperity and create a better Ethiopia, better than what we have and what we are today, so we will not only aim to be the African cub but the world cub, why not. **ሀልም አይደገምም አልልም።**

Having said that, now I move to the main topic of this article, the debate on the Ethiopian National football team name. I do not know how many of you totally agree with the name of Walia, but I do not. In fact Walia is one of the endemic animals of Ethiopia, as is Chelada Baboon and others. You may think it is an appropriate name for the national team, after all you may say that what matters is performance not a name. But I totally disagree. If a name does not matter we would not have a name, would we?

Since I learned about the name I started forwarding my comments of Facebook. In fact I have composed a short poem about it together with a short graphic. That may have put my message across. Whether I have triggered the issue or not may be a total coincidence as others as well have started an online petition to change the name. Guess what, some of us think that the appropriate name of the National Team has to be The Black Lions. However, my suggestion is not without challenge and I love that challenge. That helps me explain the rationale behind our chosen name, The Black Lions.

First let us start from historical prospective, whether we like them or not, our past rulers have used lions as symbol of our nation. Even now we keep lions in the National Palace. When the Ethiopian patriots were fighting the Italian fascists they fought under the name of Black Lions. Lions are everywhere in our life, our coins and money, our hospital, schools, transport system use Lions one way or the other. The symbol of Ethiopian Airlines used to be lions. Even in recent history our best military corps in the East used to be called **አንበሳው ክፍለ ጦር**. Here we can present paramount

historical evidence why the Ethiopian National football Team has to be named after the Black Lions.

Second some may think that we call the National Team Walia because Walia is unique, which cannot be found anywhere in the world. For them I can say that we have other endemic animals in Ethiopia, such as Gelada Baboon (ጭላዳ ዠንጀሮ) Menilik's Bushbuck (ሚኒሊክ ዱኩላ) Nyala (ኒያላ) and so on. Here I do not know how many of us knew that a recent study shows that Ethiopian Lions are genetically unique Lions. According to The Independent online: DNA confirms Ethiopian lions are a genetically distinct group: "A pride of captive lions descended from the private menagerie of Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia is genetically distinct from all other lions of Africa, a study has found. The Ethiopian lion has a distinctive dark mane and is slightly smaller and more compact than other African lions. Now an analysis of its DNA has revealed the Ethiopian lion is also a distinct breed." <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/dna-confirms-ethiopian-lions-are-genetically-distinct-group-8207559.html>



Last but not least it is worth mentioning the English National team name is lions, in fact three lions depicted on the national team emblem. Guess what, England do not have wild lions in their history unless otherwise in prehistoric times. However they call the national team the lions. They do however have foxes, those who live in London and drive at night time they can see them. So the England team would be better called Foxes and the Ethiopian National Team Black Lions, as we were, as we are and as we will be.

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