

## Meet Joe Kadenge, soccer maestro



Soccer legend Joe Kadenge

By our correspondent, April 8 2012

Joe Kadenge is the Kenya soccer maestro whose magic never tarnished with fleeting seasons and is regarded as the finest footballer ever produced by the country. He starred for Abaluhya FC, who later became AFC Leopards, helping it to a very successful run in the 1960s when it regularly won silverware in local and regional competition.

Kadenge also represented the national team for 14 years. Despite retiring from the game in 1968, Kadenge is today still held in high regard by all Kenyans, a legendary figure in the history of soccer in Kenya and such was in Kenya remains *"Kadenge na mpira shuti goal!"*



Joe Kadenge reflects back on a satisfying career

He started playing football at an early age when kids would roll dry banana fibers into a ball and, combined with talent, gave him an edge over others. Born in 1935 in Western Kenya, Kadenge's soccer career began at Musingu Intermediate School where he undertook his early education. He, however, started playing competitively in 1957 when he turned out for a Nakuru Combined team in one of the earliest Inter-District tournaments during the Remington Cup.



Kadenge na mpira, Kadenge na mpira...

After leaving Musingu, he spent some time with North Nyanza before moving on to Nairobi to join Maragoli United Football Club where he stayed for one season in 1963. He then left and joined Abaluyia Football Club (AFC Leopards) until 1975. Kadenge made his debut for the national team during the 1957 Gossage Cup competition held in Zanzibar. One year later, his career took a turn for the better when he inspired Kenya to a 2-0 victory over Uganda in the Gossage Cup final. Apart from scoring the first goal, he provided the pass for the second in a thrilling performance, which left the fans impressed with his ball control and dribbles.



Passing on the skills: Kadenge holding a soccer training clinic.

He hang up his boots in 1965 only to make a comeback with a bang and steered the national team — Harambee Stars to victory in the inaugural East and Central Africa Challenge Cup the same year. He quit the national team for good in 1970 preferring to go into coaching. He was later appointed coach of the national team, Harambee Stars, where he has also been the manager. Kadenge boasts a sporting family and Evans, Francis and Oscar have stood out to emulate their father. Presently, he operates a taxi business in Nairobi.

*Source: INGWE, AFC Leopards Newsletter*