



LYSON ZULU

AN INTERNATIONAL INSPIRATION

Lyson Zulu grew up with a ball at his feet and knows firsthand just how powerful sport can be in shaping lives. His football skills took him around the world and opened up avenues he never thought possible, including coming to study in the UK. At university he discovered the Youth Sport Trust and the power that it has to change the lives of young people for the better; he learned skills and knowledge that have been integral to his career since as the Head of Football at the Olympic Youth Development Centre, where he also leads the Young Leaders programme. Lyson is a shining example of how sport for development can be applied anywhere in the world and promotes the values of the Youth Sport Trust wherever he goes. Read the story of this fantastic ambassador below.



I grew up in Kalingalinga, a compound 10km from the city centre of Lusaka in Zambia. I have been playing football for as long as I can remember. My father is a big sports fan, football to be specific so it was only normal that I and my two brothers ended up playing the sport. Football gave me an identity in the community and it provided an opportunity for me to interact with other guys from the neighbourhood. It was great fun!

In 2002, I participated in the Education through Sport (Edusport) Foundation tournament in which they were going to select 22 players that would eventually participate in the World Youth Football tournament's Gothia Cup and Norway Cup in Sweden and Norway respectively. The idea of travelling abroad to play football was a dream, the whole idea seemed a bit farfetched to be honest. But we loved the sport and so we played. Our compound/neighbourhood was home! We were stars there and everyone knew us. That was our world!

We emerged victorious after I was brought down in the last 2 minutes for the penalty which we converted successfully. We were happy but the nerves kicked in as we waited to listen to the names of the people who had been selected to go to Sweden and Norway. It was quiet, you could hear a pin drop as people cheered after every name that was called. As the list went on and on, you could see the joy on the peoples faces whose

names had made the list. The announcer had called 21 names and as fate would have it, the last name, the 22nd name on the list was my name.

In July that year, I left the country for the first time and headed to Sweden; tall buildings, greener grass, different language, food and culture. It lived up to the expectation I had of Europe. We lost in the quarter finals in Sweden and proceeded to Norway to play in the Norway Cup which we did not do so well in, but got most disciplined team award. After what we considered a successful outing, it was time to head back home to Zambia.

Since returning home, the young people were intrigued to know what Europe was like and so they asked a lot of questions. At that point, I saw myself as a role model; someone who could give something back to the community, to give hope to the young ones, so they can dream and achieve their potential in life. That's when I was trained by the Edusport Foundation as a Peer Leader and used football to teach about life skills. As a Peer Leader, I led sessions for the schools in my area and integrated the life skills to tackle issues that were affecting people on the ground; issues like HIV/AIDS, drug abuse and gender based violence.

Whilst working in my community, I started working with the International Development

through Excellence And Leadership in Sport (IDEALS) project where some UK students would come to Zambia every summer to work with the local Peer Leaders to deliver sports and educational sessions to the Zambian communities. A year later, I was given a scholarship by the University of Bath to do the foundation degree in Sports Performance, an opportunity I never thought possible. Whilst at Bath University, I learnt about the Youth Sport Trust Step into Sport camps which sounded like a great opportunity for me to stay involved in coaching and meet like-minded people. I applied and I was successful. The experience at the Step into Sport Camps at Loughborough was mind blowing, I count it as one of the best times. Leading young people through their journeys through the 4 day camp was one of the most rewarding things I have done. It's like you see their stages of growth in leadership, all shy on the first day and then you see them grow in confidence and taking up leadership roles as the camp goes on.

You see yourself grow too, developing teamwork skills, communication skills, planning skills, creative thinking and how to make your sessions inclusive. Skills that have been useful even in today's work. I was lucky enough to be a part of that camp for 3 years and if I could do it again, I definitely would. The support team of the fellow team leaders, the welfare team and staff from the Youth Sport Trust was just incredible.



LYSON ZULU

AN INTERNATIONAL INSPIRATION

Whilst at Bath University, I played football and managed to win the British University Sports Association (now British University Championships). I worked with the UK students on fundraising for the Zambia IDEALS project, delivered sessions for the Umutima UK charity which supports the work of Edusport in Zambia by providing sports and educational opportunities to exceptional young leaders in Zambia.

After 2 years at Bath, I moved to Loughborough where I did my honours in Sport Science and Management and have since graduated. I moved back to Zambia and have since been working for the Olympic Youth Development Centre (OYDC) which is a partnership between the International Olympic Committee and the National Olympic Committee of Zambia. I am Head of Football and also the Health and Education Officer. I am in charge of the Young Leaders programme and working with identifying young people with potential of being leaders.

“ Leading young people through their journeys through the four day camp was one of the most rewarding things I have done.”

