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Inclusive Editorial

"Basketball First-timer Senegal, Wins Bronze at 2023 Berlin Games"

Taking place from June 17th to June 25th in Berlin, the Special Olympics World Games 2023 attract more than 7000 athletes across 26 sporting events. After beating France, which initially won in the group stage, Basketball First-timers Senegal will go home with Bronze under their belt after the 2023 Berlin Games.

From Africa to Asia, Antarctica to Australasia, athletes from 176 countries as well as volunteers and family members such as Sabelle Diata took part in what is described by many as an amazing experience. Sabelle and her husband Cyriel Caudron travelled from Belgium to enjoy the Special Olympic World Games.

Sabelle, a Senegalese by origin, told me that she is mainly in the German capital to cheer for the Senegalese Basketball Team. "I have a nephew in the team whom I love to see taking part in such sporting and other activities. Like all other competitors, these athletes with physical and intellectual challenges definitely need to be actively included in our everyday engagements because they are a very crucial part of society.", she continued.

The Senegalese who are taking part in the 5x5 Men's Mixed Unified Basketball (wherein traditional athletes compete alongside those without disabilities to promote partnership and inclusion amongst others) lost their first game against Luxembourg. This did not stop Sabelle, other relatives of the athletes and fans at large from cheering up their team in every game.

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As it were, Yerro Ndiaye, Senagal's basketball team coach was not worried after their first loss. "We are playing against France on Wednesday, and we are good because France lost to Germany" said the coach.

Being one of the most entertaining and tightly contested basketball matches of this year's games, Senegal beat their German counterparts by a very narrow margin of 1 point, the game ended 19-18 in favour of Senegal.

This historic first win for the Senegalese team created a buzzing and entertaining atmosphere from the crowds, and Sabelle who all along was joyously waving her country's flag. Senegalese players like Ablie Ndiaye, Pap Badji as well as many German fans joined the congratulatory celebrations, which lasted well after the game.

With the curtains of the 2023 Berlin Special Olympic Games being drawn, there is great hope that particularly the idea of inclusion, will leave lasting impacts for people with physical and intellectual disabilities from around the world.

Text: Modou Bajan

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