



ITTF AFRICAN JUNIOR AND CADET CHAMPIONSHIPS

GHANA 2019



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Goda, Egyptian angel flies high in Accra

WHEN Hana Goda arrived in Accra, Ghana for the ITTF African Junior and Cadet Championships, it was quickly obvious that she meant business and had set her sight on clinching her first continental title at cadet level.

Despite not being selected for the Egyptian cadet team, Goda went to work from the start of the cadet singles, taking out her opponents convincingly from the group stage to the knockout encounters. The radiant teenager was full of energy in all her matches and this was reflected in the manner she executed her game plans.

In the final she went up against a familiar foe in Farida Badawy. The match was a good show for the tournament as both players entertaining the crowd with their beautiful rallies.

From the start, Goda took charge with her near-perfect service and flawless topspin, which appeared to confound her compatriot. In less than 30 minutes, Goda was way ahead, claiming the first three games at 11-7, 13-11, 11-1.

Badawy nearly scuttled her 9-3 lead in the fourth game as Goda caught up with her at 9-9. But mistakes by Goda cost her two valuable points, which made her lose the encounter at 9-11.

However, Goda quickly recovered, racing to the lead from the start of the fifth game to put the encounter beyond her opponent. She won it 11-2 and celebrated with her trademark exclamation of 'Yah Allah'.

An elated Goda said: "I feel I can take over from all these great players in this competition, particularly playing against my teammate. Most times in Egypt, we always meet in the final and it has always been close. I am so happy that I won today by 4-1 because it was a very tough match. When I was leading 3-0 and she won the fourth game, I had to regain the lead to ensure I won at 4-1."

"In most matches, my mum used to sit close to the table but I told her to go up so that I would not see her. This really helped me to focus more in the match. I am so happy that I won this cadet title, having won the African Hopes last year," she added



The Champ: Hana Goda relishing her triumph in Accra, Ghana



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Alisa Hojani: Tanzanian debutant came, saw...and learned a lot

TANZANIA has never appeared at the ITTF African Junior and Cadet Championships. The country and its sole representative in this year's competition, 13-year-old Alisa Hojani, therefore made their debut in Accra, Ghana at the just-ended continental table tennis fiesta.

While she did not record any victory at the tournament, Hojani enjoyed every moment she spent competing here and she appreciated the fact that she came to represent Tanzania in the country's maiden appearance at any African Junior and Cadet Championships.

Accompanied by her father, the youngster said: "It was a good feeling for me being the first athlete to represent Tanzania in any African Junior and Cadet Tournament. I came here to have the experience and I have learned a lot. In Tanzania not many people play table tennis. I am excited that I made history here in Ghana."

The Grade Eight pupil of International School of Tanganyika (IST) said that her interest in table tennis took root because of the opportunity the sport afforded her to represent Tanzania. "I did sports like football, basketball, badminton, swimming and table tennis. But I decided to focus

more on table tennis because it gives me a better opportunity to represent Tanzania as not many people play the game in my country unlike in other sports. My interest in table tennis was ignited when I went to play badminton and I saw some people playing table tennis. I decided to try it out and I just fell in love with it," she said.

Under the tutelage of Coach Tsa Mtalaso, Hojani continues to hone her skills, which were helped a great deal by her participation in the ITTF East Africa Hopes Training where she picked up a better knowledge of the sport.

Hojani has a soft-spot for Hana Goda of Egypt whom she described as a talented, pacey player.

Despite her love of the game, the young Hojani would delay turning pro for some time as her first goal is to become a medical doctor. "I don't think I will want to take table tennis professionally any time soon. I will only seize every opportunity the sport would give me to represent Tanzania in major competitions. I will continue to train hard in order to raise my game. My priority is to pursue my dream of becoming a medical doctor," Hojani explained.



Debutant: Alisa Hojani made history for herself and Tanzania in Accra, Ghana

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