

BEFORE NAIROBI, BRAZZAVILLE

THE 3rd CENTRAL AFRICAN GAMES

by *BANZOUZI MALONGA*

From 15th to 30th April 1987, Brazzaville (CGO) will host the 3rd Central African Games, the largest sports event of the sub-region, which comprises 11 member countries of the 4th zone of the SCSA (Supreme Council for Sport in Africa). The Games in Brazzaville are special in that they count as eliminatory rounds for the 4th African Games to be held in Kenya. Several hundred athletes will be confronting one another in the five disciplines on the programme of the Games. The host country, the Congo, is working hard on the preparations and is seeking sponsors.

The last meeting of Sports Ministers from zone 4, held in Brazzaville in 1986, decided that the 3rd Central African Games would take place in the Congolese capital. The five disciplines on the programme are : track and field, basketball, handball, volleyball (men's and women's) and football. In addition to gold medals, the winners in the team sports will obtain a visa for the 4th Continental Games scheduled to take place in Nairobi (KEN) in autumn of this year. The 1,500 athletes who will be coming from Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, the Congo, the Central African Republic, Gabon, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, São Tomé, Rwanda and Zaire, will therefore be facing a dual challenge.

The eleven member countries of zone 4 of the C.S.S.A. in the competition have already announced the disciplines in which their athletes will be competing :

Athleticism : Angola, Cameroun, CAR, Congo, Burundi, Gabon, Rwanda, São Tome, Chad, Zaire.

Handball : Angola, Cameroon, Congo, Gabon, Zaire.

Basketball : Angola, Cameroon, CAR, Congo, Gabon, Rwanda, Chad, Zaire.

Volleyball: Angola, Cameroon, Congo, Burundi, Gabon, Rwanda, Zaire.

Football: Angola, Cameroon, CAR, Congo, Gabon, Rwanda, Equatorial Guinea, Chad, Zaire.

Instituted over a decade ago, the Central African Games took place for the first time in 1976 in Libreville (GAB). Several hundred athletes competing in eight disciplines met in the Gabonese capital. After an interval of four years, the young people of Central Africa met again for the second edition in Luanda (ANG) in 1981. Over 2000 athletes took part in more than ten disci-





The Democratization Stadium at Brazzaville.

plines. Since then, the very difficult financial situation of the countries in the zone has raised doubts concerning the organization of the Games. Thus, Zaire, chosen to host the 3rd Games in 1985, withdrew owing to lack of funds. Zaire's withdrawal left a gap which seriously affected the zone's competitiveness. Will the Games in Brazzaville relaunch the sub-regional competitions? The very limited number of disciplines on the programme of these Games gives them a very modest character compared to the Games in Libreville and Luanda. It is to be feared that these Games are going to die out since the national treasuries can not sustain the organization of large scale games. A formula will certainly have to be found to save the games and avoid the image of Continental Games which have been held only three times in 22 years.

PREPARATIONS AND FINANCING

The Congo, host country of the 3rd Central African Games, is not totally inexperienced. As early as 1965, the first African Games took place in Brazzaville. In July 1972, multidisciplinary Games took place in the Congolese capital under the name of the "Central Africa Cup", etc.

For these 3rd Central African Games, Brazzaville already possesses the necessary infrastructure. The "Revolution Stadium", designed as a multi-purpose venue, will house most of the events. Some improvements, in particular reinforcement of the athletics track, are already being made. The Ornano, University and Democratization stadia, situated in workers' res-

idential areas, will also be used as venues for the Games. The athletes, who will be accommodated in halls of residence on the campus, will use the university facilities for training purposes. Officials will be housed in the large international-standard hotels. It remains for the Congolese authorities to find the means of financing the Games.

In fact, almost 12 million French francs are indispensable for the organization of the 3rd Central African Games. That is the sum the Congolese authorities are trying to raise. The Congolese government hopes to see 80% of the amount covered by sponsors in return for advertising opportunities. The Congolese Minister of Sports is in contact with a number of industrial and commercial companies. This is in keeping with the modern organization concept which should be able to guarantee the regular staging of large-scale multidisciplinary games. Some half dozen companies have responded to the appeal of the Congolese authorities: amongst others, Adidas, the petroleum companies AGIP and ELF, the Development Bank of the Central African States, Accor, etc.

Modern sports organizations need the help of sponsors with games.

The 3rd Central African Games are welcome as a new impetus to sports activities in zone 4. They are a foretaste of the African Games, to which they form a prelude.

B.M.



The lion emblem of the Regional Games