

ALDRINE NSUBUGA

ARSENAL FINALLY ENTER THE GATES OF HEAVEN WITH 14TH TITLE

Screams rang out the Kampala night skies on Wednesday night after Bournemouth's 1-0 victory over 10-time Premier League winners Manchester City.

Arsenal fans' bated breath had been held for so long, the release had to come in dramatic style. They were confirmed champions for the 14th time in their history, 22 years since winning their last title.

In my neighborhood, the sound of drums, vuvuzelas and music filled the air as hundreds of youths rushed out of make shift cinema halls in euphoric celebration. The legend of Arsenal – the Invincibles – had been learnt by many through folklore to these young men and women of 32 years and below, for two decades. That Thierry Henry is the Premier League's greatest ever player; Dennis Bergkamp, probably the best number 10 and Patrick Vieira, arguably one of the top two defensive midfielders alongside Manchester United's Roy Keane is for them, a story but one they can't relate to.

All however witnessed Arsene Wenger's flair football that was filled with technical beauty and romance. The days of Cesc Fabregas, Santi Cazorla, Robin van Persie, Theo Walcott, Jack Wilshere, Abou Diaby, Emmanuel Adebayor, Mesut Ozil. Fantasy football that sadly, never produced a premiership title. This is the background to the carnival scenes across the country at different bars, pubs and night clubs. Arsenal champions at last with a game to spare.

From flops to champions

It was ironic too that Kai Havertz – the stone that the builders regarded as worthless – is the one that has helped Arteta's nearly team finally cross the finish line. His goal against Burnley; only his second all season, has delivered the holy grail to end the decade long drought. There are others like him; unpopular with fans because of their average quality but who have played a key role in this historic season where Arsenal could still add a second trophy; the champions league. Viktor Gyokeres, top scorer with 14 goals has split the gunners right down the middle. Many think he is not Arsenal quality while others think he is overrated. Eberechi Eze is alongside Bukayo Saka second top scorer with seven goals but he is not universally appreciated. He carries a lazy demeanor and doesn't come off as a team player willing to work his boots off.

Three different match winners who, at different times in the season, were chastised by Arsenal fans for their form. It has been the signature of Mikel Arteta's winning team. 18 different scorers, 16 different goal creators.

The team, rather than the individual, unlike the Invincibles of 2003-04. Then, Thierry Henry scored 30 goals, while Robert Pires scored 14, leading to a combined goals total of 44 between the pair, which was 60% of the team goals.



Far into the future, Arsenal will look back and wonder, how a team whose individual quality has been a subject of debate since Arteta's arrival, went on to win a championship in a straight battle with the Premier League's greatest ever manager; Pep Guardiola.

Not only was the Manchester City manager on course to win a treble, the class in his squad and experience of winning championships was streets apart. Arteta has been branded 'nearly' in the last three seasons, prompting many club faithful to demand for his sacking to pave way for an accomplished manager of winning experience. It's the Spaniard who has had the last laugh.

Mental images of him gesticulating on the touchline with animosity when refereeing decisions went against his team will now play out like a documentary. He is the only one however, who will admit that, had it not been for Guardiola, his mentor, Arsenal's 14th championship would never have become a reality.

His countryman tutored him, inspired him and then after, gave him the head-to-head race whose outcome has now created a legacy at the Emirates. Arteta has now finally joined the elite club of world class managers.