**Thank you Zersenay Tadese**

**Amanuel Biedemariam**

Ever since he burst upon the scene in 2002, Zersenay Tadese has proven that he is the embodiment and example of what Eritrea is all about; resilient, consistent and victorious. Like my fellow Eritreans around the world, I have been wowed by what he has been able to achieve personally and for the people of Eritrea in general by extension. In a sport that requires tremendous amount of team support and organizational structure for any success, Zersenay has single handedly placed himself in a position of international acclaim and put Eritrea in a map in a sport that has traditionally been dominated by a handful of nations.

My aim therefore, is to thank Zersenay Tadese for all the joyous moments that he brings into the faces of all Eritreans every time we see him. We are happy to see him compete and celebrate and when he celebrates. We are happy to see him meet and enjoy Eritrean communities in the Diaspora. We were happy when he went back to Eritrea and contributed to the lives of Eritreans in many ways. We were also happy when he was received by the biggest victory-welcome accorded him by the people of Eritrea from the President down to the youngest that revere this deserving soul. Eritrea needed Zersenay to be the best possible human being that he could be and he delivered with his heart, dignity and humble nature. He brought a sense of decency and became a true model for Eritreans and the world, for those that chose to notice. He is my hero and the hero of millions of Eritreans. I am thankful that he set the bar high for all to follow, and grateful for the example he set for future generation of Eritrean athletes.

Clearly his professional accomplishments speak volumes of the type of hard working and dedicated individual that he is. He is the current record holder of world’s half Marathon. He won bronze in the 10,000 meters in 2004 Olympics in Athens Greek making him the first-ever Eritrean Olympic medalist. He has won over twenty medals ranging from bronze to gold all over the world. He is the epitome of success with a demeanor that is a true reflection of what Eritreans are; courteous and gracious to a fault. And he did it graced by an Eritrean flag that is tailor fitted for him. However; what stands out is that outfit exudes a national soul that is confident and determined to show the world what Eritrea is all about.

I want to thank Zersenay for being the true anchor of Eritrean sports based on international standards. I want to thank him for setting THE example of what it means to achieve success and yet remain grounded while firmly connecting with his country at all levels. I want to thank him for his strength and for remaining steady just like Eritrea has over the last ten years when many where ganging up to frustrate her into giving up. He never gave up even when teams ganged up on him. To the contrary, he saw what he needed and recruited others into becoming a part of his team. He helped to expand the size and quality of Eritrean athletes in a world stage. While much could be said about all the achievements of this giant; all the accolades would have meant nothing if Zersenay was selfish and irresponsible. However, Zersenay understood his historic responsibilities and his place in the history books of Eritrea and etched it by embracing his people and reveling on their support.

Zersenay Tadese, I thank you for making Eritrea proud. I thank you for being the anchor and pillar of a nation. I thank you for the foundation and legacy you have established. Thank you!

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