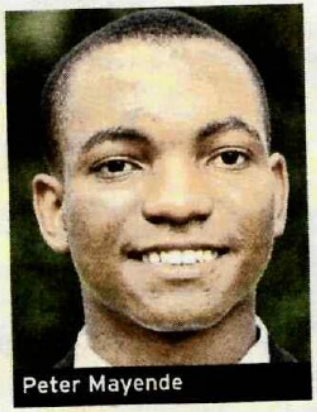
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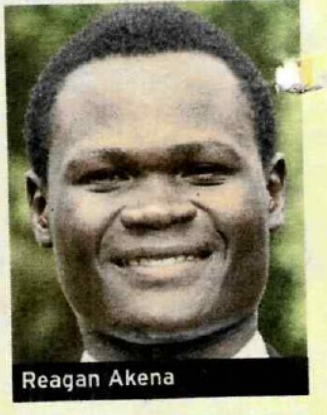
By Michael Nsubuga


Abdu Kakeeto


John Musiimenta


Peter Mayende


Kasese's Amon Bwambale


Reagan Akena

GOLFERS DEMONSTRATE THAT DUAL CAREERS IN SPORT IS ACHIEVABLE

The current Uganda national golf team demonstrates that pursuing a dual career is both feasible and rewarding in the short and long term. The squad that competed in the Victoria Cup against Kenya at Entebbe Club last week also challenges the perception that golf is only for the old and wealthy.

But it also shows that talent can only blossom when it is discovered and nurtured at an early age. Just as secondary schools have embraced the sport through the annual Uganda Inter-Schools Golf Championship, the Association of Uganda University Sports (AUUS) can also embrace it under the AUUS games as golfers advance in their educational careers.

John Musiimenta, 21, the team captain, is a second-year electrical engineering student at Makerere University who started out as a 10-year-old with the help of his father, Julius Musiimenta, who is also a golfer. He is now keen on his studies, but in between, golf provides the perfect escape for relaxation and exercise.

"My academic schedule has some free afternoons; I normally do golf or engage in exercise in that free time, and that is how I balance my time for books and sport," Musiimenta said.

"I would like to take my academics seriously, and maybe after graduation, I can decide to continue as an amateur or turn professional." Abdu Kakeeto, 24, from Tooro Club, who grew up and attended Mpanga SS just near the golf course, has also joined YMCA and doesn't find it hard to balance books with the game. He would play the game every day after school. "I was in a day school and could play after school and during weekends.

"I'm working hard to put my papers together so that I can go to the US to further my game because I got a scholarship from there," Kakeeto, who first went to the course in 2014 and started playing in 2018, said.

Amon Bwambale, 'The Little Tiger' from Kasese, also attached to the Tooro Club, will soon also join a university after completing his A-level last year. He is also planning to further his career in the US if an opportunity for a scholarship comes his way.

"I sat down with my mum when I joined S.4, and we agreed that I should focus on school first and only play golf during the holidays because she felt that I had mastered the sport and would continue with it later. Thank God I scored first grade in my S.4 and now looking forward to doing law at the university." Bwambale, who started competing at 16 and whose role model is Rory McIlroy, stated.

"I want to up my game, improve my world golf ranking so that I can compete in bigger international events, especially events like the DP World Tour."

Juliana High School's S.3 student, Peter Mayende, 17, the youngest on the national team, has already won several junior events and was one of the best performers at last year's and this year's Victoria Cup. Last year, he competed in the UAE Golf Championship, one of the most competitive junior golf tournaments on the U.S Kids Golf international circuit, following stand-out performances in the NCBA Junior Golf Series, where he dominated the Boys 15–18 category. He finished tenth out of 18.

Mayende also represented the country at the All-Africa Junior Golf Team Championship, where Uganda finished fifth out of 12 countries in Tunisia, earning the best finish on the Ugandan team.

"I would like to play on the PGA tours in the future because I know I can make it. I like Rory McIlroy.

"I live near the Lugazi course, so it has been easy for me to balance both education and golf," Mayende stated.

Biomedical laboratory science student at IUIU, Elton Thembo **(pictured left)**, aka 'Elton Woods,' had a challenging beginning in S.1 in 2017 but has also been able to pursue a dual career, playing golf in the holidays.

"I was so delighted when I won my first golf trophy after emerging as runner-up in a junior competition. I had just joined the sport, so that win motivated me to continue working hard and practicing," Thembo, the handicap two golfer, said.

"My future plan is to turn pro after I complete my four-year course. My role model is Tiger Woods; that is why they call me "Elton Woods."

The 2024 Uganda Open champion, Reagan Akena, who lives near the Lugazi course, had it easy at the start due to his proximity to the course, and he has been able to balance his dual career.

"The sport has been good to me, I have gotten a lot of things, travelled the whole world, picked up many lessons, met many people, made friends, and even travelled to the US for the amateur championship, and I'm travelling back again this year to try and qualify to play in the US Open."

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