



SC Villa players will be hoping to celebrate some goals in Khartoum tonight. PHOTO BY E. CHICO

SC Villa join Vipers in 'novices' Caf queue

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KAMPALA. SC Villa joined the national league in 1979, five years after the club's formation as Nakivubo Boys. Vipers, then Bunnamwaya, were only promoted to the top division in 2006.

The latter had been founded in 1969 and only got through the 2005 Super Mini League to arrive in what is now called Azam Uganda Premier League.

By the time Vipers reached the top for the first time, Villa had won the last of their 16 league trophies, two years prior, and made 19 appearances in continental competitions.

Those included reaching the Africa Cup of Champion Club final, today's Orange Caf Champions League, final in 1991 losing to Tunisia's Club Africain.

First title

While it took Villa three years in the league to win their first title in 1982, Vipers waited only a season longer as their first came in the fourth season, 2010.

Head to head title count stands at SC Villa 16 Vipers 2. It would be irrelevant to dig further into how big the two sides' trophy cabinets are as the weighing scale is uneven.

However, this weekend, the two Ugandan continental representatives will feel like they share so much in common. Both are near-novices on the continent.

Last evening at Nakivubo, Vipers, the reigning league champions, faced Nigeria's Enyimba in the two-legged preliminary round of the Confederation of African Football (Caf) Champions League, a first appearance on the continent.

Today in the Sudanese capital Khartoum, SC Villa visit Al Khartoum at the same stage of the Caf Confederations Cup, a reward for winning last year's Uganda Cup.

Pull out

Faced with routine fines from the continental body, Caf, local governing body, Fufa, imposed a US\$10,000 (over Shs35m today) fee on teams that qualify for such competitions but never show up.

Clubs are, now, required to deposit that amount before Fufa can press the button confirming Uganda's participation in such events. Both SC Villa and Vipers have opted out before. SC Villa, whose last continental game came in 2005 embarrassment at the hands of Egyptian giants Al Ahly in the Champions, did not honour their 2010 engagement.

Having beaten URA 2-1 in the 2009 Uganda Cup final, Villa bought themselves a ticket into the Confederations Cup but they could not find money to take the plunge.

Vipers would borrow a leaf from SC Villa's book a year later. After clinching their first league in 2010, they did not bother to sign the Fufa voucher even if their patron Lawrence Mulindwa was Fufa boss then. Because of Mulindwa, Vipers have some measure of stability even if only Erisa Ssekisambu (URA), Mike Mutyaba (El Merriekh) and William Wadri (KCCA) have had continental experience at club level.

Contrasting styles

Coach George 'Best' Nsimbe, barely a fortnight in the job, is an expert among the team's hierarchy having led KCCA to the continental slaughter chamber twice and Victors once.

On the other hand, coach Ibrahim Kirya does not possess that expertise as Villa are here after 11 years in oblivion. None of the current players was at the club in 2005.

The administration too has changed drastically in that decade. From President Franco Mugabe to Fred Muvema to no-one-in-particular to Ben Misagga.

It must feel like the first day at school, for everyone involved.