

Nassozi: Lone woman making loud statement on the bench

Quiet Belief. In Mukono, where she once lifted the trophy as a player, she senses an opportunity to complete the circle. It will be a defining moment for girls, proof that even in the most crowded of dugouts, one voice can still rise.

BY GEORGE KATONGOLE

In a championship featuring 62 teams and dozens of seasoned male tacticians, one figure has quietly but firmly rewritten the script. Brenda Nassozi popularly known as Coach Brenda Amira, is the only female head coach at this year's USSA girls' football finals hosted by Seroma Christian School in Mukono. Guiding Boni Consilii Girls Vocational SS with conviction, Nassozi has not only secured a place among the last four but also booked a ticket to the FEASSA Games scheduled later this year in Dodoma, Tanzania, the region's premier schools competition.

For a coach in just her first year at the helm, it is a remarkable rise. For a woman in a male-dominated technical area, it is something more. "It was our first target to qualify for East Africa and we have achieved it. Now we want to win it," she says.

From glory to touchline grit
Nassozi's journey is rooted in the same soil where she has won the hearts of many.

In 2017, she captained Mukono High School to the national title, later representing Uganda at the East African games in Kenya. A commanding midfielder then, she embodied leadership long be-



Cameraderie. Players of Boni Consilii celebrate their goal against Jipra amidst instructions from their coach Nassozi at Uganda Christian University- Mukono. PHOTOS/GEORGE KATONGOLE

fore stepping into coaching. But her playing career was cut short by a knee injury. "After the injury, I had to accept and move on. I believe nothing happens without a reason.

This is the path God wanted for me," she recalls. Nassozi is yet to heal from that injury as it denied her an opportunity to continue her studies at Uganda Christian University where she had been scouted. She turned to coaching, rising through the ranks with Caf training badges and sharpening her philosophy in the dugout. Now 28, she is building something of her own.

Rewriting the script
Boni Consilii have long been known for their physicality — direct, robust and relentless. Nassozi

FACTBOX

Full name: Brenda Nassozi
Nickname: Coach Brenda Amira
Date of birth: June 26, 1997
Age: 28
Hometown: Kyotera

Playing career
Mukono High (2013-2017)
Ajax Queens (Women's Super League)
USSA champion (2017, captain)
Coaching qualifications: Caf B Licence
Ambition: To become head coach of the women's national team

has added a new dimension.

"When I arrived, they were already strong physically," she explains. "So I introduced modern football — technical, tactical and focused on ball work." Her blueprint is to build from the back, switch play and move forward. The results have been immediate.

After navigating a demanding path to the knockout rounds, Boni Consilii edged Jinja Progressive 5-4 on penalties in the quarterfinals following a 1-1 draw, Rinah Ariho equalising from the spot after an early setback. In front, the goals have come steadily. Lead striker Sheila Mungutimu has hit seven goals so far, with Rinah Ariho adding five, underlining the attacking balance Nassozi has cultivated. "They try to bring what we train onto the pitch. That is what

makes me proud," she says.

Room of men

At Seroma, Nassozi's presence is both rare and symbolic. In a field of 62 teams, she is the only female head coach, a reality that reflects the broader gender imbalance in football, where technical roles remain overwhelmingly male.

"You can face challenges because some male coaches think women are not committed. But I had to prove them wrong," she says. Her authority, she insists, is earned through work.

"When you are the head coach, they follow you. It is about your goals, your discipline and what you show every day." For her players, the impact goes beyond tactics.

"A female coach changes everything. The girls can open up to you. There are things they cannot tell male coaches," she explains. "And when they see you, they believe."

Built by family, driven by faith

Football, for Nassozi, is a family affair. Her father played the game, her mother was a netballer, and all three siblings are now coaches.

But it is her elder sister, Dorothy Namugenyi, who shaped her path. "She is my role model. She pushed me and showed me it is possible."

That support system remains central offering guidance, motivation and grounding through the highs and lows of the game. So too does faith. "Believe in God. When you train hard and prepare well, everything is possible," she says.

More than football

Nassozi's philosophy stretches far beyond results. In a school setting, she insists on discipline, education and identity principles she reinforces daily through one-on-one conversations and team talks.

"I tell them to study. There is life after football. One day you will be mothers. You must be disciplined," she says. She is also deliberate about redefining perceptions.

"I want them to behave as girls but still play football. You can be both."