

Muzito, Ssengonzi named best at swimming awards

Teachers. Kasujja was named male swimming coach of the year while Olivier Nalwadda, of Jaguar, is female swimming coach of the year.

BY MAKHTUM MUZIRANSA

After six years, Uganda Aquatics seems to have found an effective way to hold their awards without the expensive glitz and glamour.

Borrowing from the Uganda Olympic Committee (UOC) a week earlier, the idea of having the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Awards Dinner on the same day and in the same venue could bring some consistency in holding the latter and a bit more involvement from members in the meetings - which are only wont to attract numbers during the elective assemblies. The swimming fraternity last celebrated its own in February 2020 at the then Gems Cambridge International School in Butabika.

Last weekend on Saturday, Uganda Aquatics (UAq) under the leadership of Moses Mwase brought back the awards as they celebrated the best swimmers, water polo players, coaches, and partners since they rebranded over a year ago.

It is a special afternoon to reflect on a year (2025) to remember," Olympian Jamila Lunkuse, now head of the UAq athletes' commission, said as she opened the ceremony after the AGM at Copper Chimney Restaurant, Lugogo.

Gloria Muzito was a worthy winner of the female swimmer of the year award after two gold medals (50m and 100m freestyle) and one silver (200m free) at the Islamic Solidarity Games (ISG) in Riyadh



Celebrated. Winners pose with their plaques at the Uganda Aquatics Awards. PHOTO/RASHID MATOVU.

last year. "I believe Gloria is very happy wherever she is and will be thankful to the coaches and teammates she competed with and against last year," Dolphins coach and UAq vice president (technical) Tonnie Kasujja said, after he picked the award for the Hungary-based swimmer from UOC president Donald Rukare.

Jesse Ssengonzi, who was also part of the ISG squad and also represented Uganda at the World Championships in Singapore was equally rightly named best male swimmer of the year.

"I believe that with these athletes, we are in the golden age of swimming and things will only get better," Mwase said as he picked US-based athlete Ssengonzi's award.

Tara Kisawuzi, who represented Uganda at the World Juniors in Romania and Africa Juniors in Egypt was named junior female swim-

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There was also recognition of the groups giving UAq a helping hand; Ruparelia, Midland, Excel Insurance, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Education.

mer of the year with her teammate in the latter Heer Usadadiya - now based in Australia - taking the junior male swimmer's gong.

Wide-ranging awards

Peter Ssebanakitta and Catherine Nakimuli - both Uganda's representative at the World Championships in Singapore - were named best male and female masters' swimmer of the year respectively. "I am

happy, surprised, and humbled because it is very rare that you get awarded for something you like," Ssebanakitta, who started swimming in 1968 at Nabinonya Beach as a student of St. Savio Junior School, said while Nakimuli dedicated her award to her family, her coach Joachim Sserwada, and mentor Collins Wasswa Matovu.

Matovu, who started swimming in 1973, was also a winner of the Lifetime Achievement Award alongside veterans Abu Kigonya, Johnson Mutabi Ssalongo, current UAq vice president (administration) Peter Mugisha, and Rukare.

"When we started back then as children in Makerere, I never had the wildest imagination that sports could take us this far. I keep asking what drives us and I came to conclude that it is a little bit of madness and passion. "Also back

then, they (sports leaders) used to come and measure us (for travel kit ahead of major competitions) but we never went anywhere.

It became our mission to ensure that the athletes of today are never disenfranchised. Never make athletes lose the opportunity to showcase their talent," Rukare, who is now Commonwealth Sport president and also serves as a member of the World Aquatics Bureau, said.

Meanwhile, Swagiah Mubiru and her Gators teammate Paloma Kirabo were named senior and junior female open water swimmers (OWS) of the year.

Their Gators teammate Benjamin Lutaaya took the male senior OWS accolade alongside Sailfish's Arthur Mwase, who holds the 5,000km national record at one hour, 12 minutes, and nine seconds.

Inclusive ceremony

Larry Greig Feni from Imara is special needs swimmer of the year with his coach Ezra Kalali named special needs coach of the year.

Husnah Kukundakwe and her Gators teammate Condoleezza Nakazibwe were respectively named the senior and junior female para swimmers of the year with their teammate Enoch Ssekintende named the best male para swimmer.

Makerere University's Ariyo Ahumuza and Altona's Shaun Festo Kimbowa were named the best senior and junior water polo players.

The latter's coach Erick Kisero was the best water polo coach of the year while Aqua Aki's Abel Ddamulira took the OWS accolade.

Gators' coach Muzafaru Muwanguzi was named the senior swimming and para swimming coach of the year. "Thank you (UAq) for the award and my swimmers for giving me the opportunity to express myself," Muwanguzi said.

Kasujja was named male swimming coach of the year while Olivier Nalwadda, of Jaguar, is female swimming coach of the year. Vision for Africa's Brian Matovu was named upcoming male coach of the year with Keziah Wairimu and Tabitha Nakasinde the upcoming female coaches. Gators, Makerere, and British School of Kampala were named the swimming, senior water polo, junior water polo teams of the year respectively.

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