

ANYANGO'S DEATH SPARKS SAFETY CONCERNS

It is hard to make sense of Maxine Anyango's death. Then again, death is just like that. We all know it's coming, but its arrival always feels ahead of schedule. In the case of an 18-year-old gifted athlete like Anyango with her entire life ahead of her, it feels like a robbery.

No wonder Anyango's family, friends, and teammates will wrestle with the tragedy for a long time to come. One can only hope and pray God grants them the grace to heal in weeks and months, not years.

What lessons, particularly from a sporting element, can we learn from Anyango's death? Are there safety and medical notes to take into account?

Well, there have been reports that the knee injury that precipitated the chain of events leading up to Anyango's death was the result of the poor surfaces of the basketball courts at the host school of the recent secondary school games. Anyango tore knee ligaments in St. Noa's semifinal victory against Nabisunsa, a game in which two other teammates also suffered injuries.

Organisers reportedly insisted that teams play at the host school despite teams and players expressing



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CHARLES MUTEBI

safety concerns and asking for matches to be relocated to UCU Mukono, where the courts are safer. Would the disaster have been avoided if secondary sports body USSSA had listened to those concerns?

That is an open question. Certainly, we all hope for the day when our love for

sport will be equaled by our commitment and ability to guarantee the highest safety standards at sporting events. Just last month, NEC's Richard Basangwa suffered a serious head injury against Express in the Uganda Premier League (UPL) and was taken to the hospital in a Land Cruiser because there was no usable ambulance at the stadium. And the gut-wrenching death of Suzan Muwonge's daughter Thelca Nalwanga last year still provokes many questions.

But negligence was not, at least as far as we know, a primary factor in Anyango's death. Concrete courts are not ideal for basketball, but we are light years away from schools having arenas with synthetic floors.

In Uganda, the decision to play basketball, or for that matter, any other sport, comes with the acceptance of exposing oneself to hazards likely to end in some complication. For many, it is often some chronic ankle or knee damage.

Anyango ultimately passed away on the operating table as an attempt at immediate knee surgery went awry. For family and friends, closure may not come easily, but death and life are ultimately in God's hands. There is no better way to make sense of such an event.

From the past

Team Uganda on arrival at Entebbe International

