

UGANDA'S MATCH-FIXING PROBLEM RUNS DEEPER THAN THE PLAYERS

You do not wake up and decide to fix a match, it builds slowly. A salary delayed for two months, then three. An injury with no medical cover. Promises from club officials that never materialise.

You keep showing up, training, playing, hoping. Then one day, someone approaches you with sh800,000, just to influence one moment in a game.

And suddenly, survival starts negotiating with your conscience. That is how match-fixing begins, not in greed, but in desperation.

Last week's scandal, where the Federation of Uganda Football Association (FUFA) provisionally suspended UPL officials and players including Mike Mutyaba, former KCCA FC and Uganda Cranes player and Express CEO Ashraf Miir, after a FIFA integrity alert, only brought this reality to the surface.

Investigations point to a manipulated fixture in which Express FC was expected to lose heavily, a suspicion that followed their 7-0 defeat to Kitara FC in December 2024. Betting irregularities and blocked payouts only deepened the concerns.

This did not shock many



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of us inside the game. It simply confirmed what has been simmering beneath the surface. And it is not just football, Cricket has lost young talent to similar traps, basketball circles have had their own quiet conversations. The pattern is the same, where systems are weak, the game becomes vulnerable.

A player in the Ugandan league can earn as little as sh300,000 a month, if it comes on time. In some cases, players go up to four months without pay. That is four months of rent, food, transport, and family expectations

hanging in the balance. Now imagine that same player being offered sh1m to make a costly mistake on the pitch.

That is not easy money. That is survival money. Yes, there are structured clubs like Vipers SC that offer some stability but they are the minority. For the majority, football is a full-time job without full-time security, no guarantees, no safety net, just hope.

When hope starts to fade, people start to compromise.

We see it beyond sport every day. A traffic officer takes a bribe, a process gets facilitated, rules bend where systems are weak. Sport is not isolated from society, it reflects it. The difference is, in sport, the damage is public, fans lose trust, sponsors pull back and clean athletes pay the price for decisions they did not make.

So, we must ask ourselves, are we only blaming the players, or are we confronting the system?

Institutions like FUFA, have to go beyond organizing competitions. Player welfare must be treated as a priority, not an afterthought. Contracts must mean something. Payments must be consistent and young athletes must be educated about both opportunity and risk.