

Game of hope On a dusty pitch on the outskirts of Kampala, 14-year-old Reagan Korwomuhangi pauses mid-drill, his chest heaving, eyes fixed on the ball at his feet. Until recently, he had disappeared right here... **P. 39**

Unsung heroes for Kawempe

Depth. This season, Kakumba promoted Saidah Namwanje above the other two and she has repaid the faith by delivering the league – albeit with mini flaws.

BY MAKHTUM MUZIRANSA

With the popularity surrounding them, it is rare that someone at Kawempe Muslim fails to get their due credit. Even assistant coach Moses Nkata is a highly appreciated man who many believe can run matters without his boss Ayub Khalifah by his side. That can also be seen by his involvement with the women's youth national teams.

While Kawempe is mostly known for pushing for free-flowing attacking football, some of their defensive players are also highly recognized now. Defensive midfielder Krusum Namutebi and right back Samalie Nakacwa need no introduction while few can argue with the thought that Hadijah Babirye is the best centre back in the Finance Trust Bank Fufa Women Super League (FTBFWSL) now and has probably been for a couple of seasons. The three can claim to be as important to Kawempe's cause as captain Agnes Nabukenya or goal scorer Latifah Nakasi.

Sharifah Nakimera

But while Babirye excels in game reading and creating from behind, her central defence partner Sharifah Nakimera does not get as much acclaim. Nakimera, who captained

the Kawempe school team to glory in the Uganda Secondary School Sports Association (USSSA) Games in 2024 in Ndejje, has grown from a little used right-back understudy to a dependable defender.

She goes into the battles that Babirye avoids and is getting more comfortable on the ball by the day. Initially, Nakimera was more appreciated by Nkata, who coached the school team in Ndejje and prepared it for Cecafa's Caf Women's Champions League Qualifiers in Ethiopia in 2024, than Khalifah.

Nakimera has since displaced Ritah Mushimire, who played as a centre back in the title winning 2024 season.

Aminah Nakato

Nakimera, Babirye, and Nakacwa are joined at the back by Aminah Nakato, who joined from She Corporate at the start of the 2025/26 season. She came in with experience but with a safety first or pragmatic approach towards defending that is a bit alien in The Valley.

In the past, Kawempe has looked naive in defending – especially against physical sides – because they would rather set traps and win the ball clean rather than getting a foot stuck in. They would rather risk passing the ball out of danger than boot it to safety.

However, who won the title with Corporate in 2022, came in with a reputation that could not be despised and her approach turned Kawempe's defence into a hybrid unit. Apart from Makerere University that beat them home and away, other sides failed to effectively bul-



Band of sisters. This Kawempe team has so many tenets to their success. PHOTO/JOHN BATANUDDE

ly that Kawempe defence.

Dorcus Kisakyie

Kawempe and Khalifah's antidote to physicality is ball manipulation through diminutive players. Think of club legends like Hasifah Nasuna and Sandra Nabweteme and those that followed them like Shakhirah Nyinagahirwa and Hadijah Nandago.

For the initiated and purists, Dorcus Kisakyie is easy to love because of her ball handling skills. But even the Kawempe coaching team has in the past, ironically, feared to play her because of her small body frame. In fact it took the unexpected exits and injuries of some of the aforementioned players for her to be fully trusted. National teams coach Sheryl Botes has dropped her over the same physicality concerns. Sometimes on the pitch, Kisakyie seems to play without the pressure of looking for results. She

is no goal threat but glides past opponents, of any size, like she has frozen time. She is a creative force and entertainer who, despite playing in a side that has the urge to produce results, still espouses the qualities of a player Kawempe has been known for over the years. Kawempe has won games without her but wins easily with her.

Jovia Nakagolo

In the recent past, Kawempe has lacked pace upfront. Jovia Nakagolo, who joined in the second half of the 2024/25 season, offers that.

She is an erratic finisher and sometimes struggles with decision making but her directness has given Kawempe varied dimensions especially in stretching tired defences to create space for Nabukenya and Nakasi. By the way, her seven goals this season can also all be classified as important; an opener in a 2-1 win over St. Noa Girls in October, a

lone goal in a 1-0 October win over Uganda Martyrs High School, an opener in a 2-0 home win over She Corporate in March, a late equalizer and winner away at Amus College in March, plus openers in wins against Rines SS (2-1) and Olila HS (3-1) in the title run-in.

Goalkeeping coach

Kawempe's outfield players might always take the limelight off their goalkeepers. But you cannot underlook the work of goalkeeping coach Sam Kakumba in ensuring this side has people in between the sticks that can win it points.

In the 2023/24 season, he redeemed Juliet Adeke and helped her to the best goalkeeper gong. In the 2024/25 season, he worked with Josephine Nambuya, who at one time had to recover from a 4-1 loss to Kampala Queens. Nambuya did well to keep 12 clean sheets all season.

How Viners conquered chaos to claim eighth league title

for nothing. He maintained the elite, profession-