KENYA UPSTAGES UGANDA

By Michael Nsubuga

Victoria Cup Golf
Final result
Uganda 10.5 pts
Kenya 15.5 pts

PHOTO BY MICHAEL NSUBUGA



Kenya national golf team captain Elvis Muigua poses with the Victoria Cup trophy

Uganda paid dearly for their slow start in the foursomes, surrendering the Victoria Cup Golf Championship to Kenya as the eighth championship clash between the two sides ended at the Entebbe Club on Saturday.

Kenya amassed 15.5 points (won 15 matches and halved one) to Uganda's 10.5 points to win their sixth championship in the two-nation annual duel akin to the Ryder Cup. After three days of fierce competition and five rounds of thrilling match-play, it was Kenya that once again walked away with the bragging rights, despite Uganda's spirited fight, especially in the last-round singles contest, in which Uganda led in all ten matches, though it wasn't enough, ending in a stalemate (5 points each).

The event, presented by NCBA Bank and supported by Prudential, MTN MOMO, NCS and Aquafina, had Uganda trail Kenya 6-2 after they managed only one win and squared two after Thursday's foursomes and fourballs, amounting to two points against their opponents' six wins in the two formats.

The Kenyans would stretch their lead to 9.5-2.5 after the third round of foursomes on Friday morning, but the Ugandans regrouped in the afternoon fourballs, winning three games and squaring off one to move to 5.5 points against Kenya's 10.5, going into the last round of the singles matches on Saturday.

Hard luck

On Saturday, when Abdullah Kakooza dispatched Krish Shah 4&2, in the first singles match after leading 2up through hole 9, the Ugandan fans thought this was a good omen in the round in which the Ugandans needed to win 8 games to win the championship.

Youngster Peter Mayende also got the better of Kenyan captain Elvis Muigua, winning six holes against three for a 3&2 scoreline, further brightening Ugandan chances, but Kenya's John Lejrimah stopped Uganda's Joseph Akena, 2UP in the third match before Ugandan captain John Musimenta and Elton Thembo added two more wins, beating Isaac Makhoka and Yuvraj Rajput 3&2 and 1UP respectively.

Thembo led 4up through hole-11 but almost gave away the match when complacency set in with the hard-fighting Kenyan winning four holes on the back and squaring two. But it wasn't to be for the Ugandans as the Kenyans edged the last three games with Daniel Kiragu beating Abdu Kakeeto 1UP, Junaid Manji stopping Andrew Ssekibejja on the 17th with a 2&1 score as Tsevi Soni, probably Kenya's player of the tournament, obliterated Joseph Kasozi 6&5.

"It's been tough, for sure. One thing I can say is that we didn't take advantage of the course. We had good preparations coming into the event, but I think we had a bit of bad luck on our side," Namakula, the team coach, said.