

Soccer Stars Academy rebuilds for Fufa era

Community. Parents, who have long supported the academy informally, are now being called to play formal roles. But compliance remains a challenge. Some athletes were released last year.

BY GEORGE KATONGOLE

In Kisenyi, one of Kampala's most densely populated informal settlements, Soccer Stars Academy has long been more than a football team. It has been a refuge, a talent pipeline, and a symbol of hope, all driven by its founder, youth coach Isaac Ogo.

For years, Ogo doubled as coach, administrator, financier, and community mobiliser, keeping the academy alive and nurturing raw talent from the streets into organised football. Like many community-based academies, Soccer Stars relied heavily on individual effort. The academy trains more than 70 children.

Soccer Stars is ranked in Grade Three among the 85 academies recently categorised by the Federation of Uganda Football Associations (Fufa). Of the 85, 13 were approved in Grade Two, 10 in Grade Three, 32 as Schools of Football, 10 received provisional certificates, and 20 remain under review.

The grading is based on infrastructure, technical capacity, governance, and safeguarding standards. Grade Two academies meet high standards and are recommended for licensing. Grade Three academies meet mini-



Turning.
A Soccer Stars Academy player takes on his marker during a friendly match in Mengo.
PHOTO/GEORGE KATONGOLE

FUFA ACADEMY

Grade Two: 13 academies – high standards, recommended for licensing

Grade Three: 10 academies – minimum standards, improvements needed

Schools of Football: 32 academies – focus on youth development

Provisional certificate: 10 academies – pending compliance

Under review: 20 academies – still assessed for certification

Next Registration Window

Opens: 1 July 2026

mum requirements but need improvements, while Schools of Football often focus on youth development without full compliance. Soccer Stars remains under review, with governance identified as a key pillar in its path to certification.

Fufa will issue certificates to compliant academies and recommend them for licensing by the National Council of Sports (NCS). The next registration window opens on July 1, 2026.

"Briefcase" days are over

"We can no longer survive as a briefcase academy."

"We need to streamline our activities in terms of governance and resource mobilisation," Ogo admits, reflecting on when the academy relied almost entirely on him.

"Briefcase academy" refers to setups run almost single-handedly, with all operations figuratively carried in one person's bag. While such models sustained grassroots football for years, they fall short of Fufa's new demands for leadership, accountability, and planning.

Soccer Stars has already started concrete changes. An executive committee has been established, pledging to improve training, governance and financial mobilisation.

Key roles are being formalised, with CEO Isaac Kigozi steering strategic direction.

"We need to focus on commercialising football to be able to get where we want to achieve," Kigozi says. "Talent alone is not enough anymore. We must build a system that can attract partnerships, sponsorships, and create value around what we do."

The changes are already felt on the pitch. Kitaru left back Sadiq Ssekyembe says, "I never got a chance to play in a structured academy but coach Isaac worked tirelessly to see that I progress."

With proper training schedules and clear pathways to higher competitions, I think more players will come through the academy."

Soccer Stars also boast of futsal sensation Ian Tugume (Mengo City) and hot prospect Abdulrazak Iradukunda, a midfielder with Greenlight Nansana.