

Eligibility. Despite an overly praised registration and vetting period before the Games, ineligible players continue to infiltrate USSSA activities. At the group stages of girls' football, Mukono Kings were eliminated for using an ineligible player then in the Round of 16, St. Mary's Magdalene was ousted before it could take on Jinja Progressive following a petition from Kashenshero for the same reasons.



Planned Kick-off. The retired Bishop of Kampala Diocese Dr Hannington Mutebi symbolically kicks the ball to mark the start of the Ball Games 1 at Seroma SS in Mukono. PHOTOS/GEORGE KATONGOLE

BY MAKHTUM MUZIRANSA

The 2026 Uganda Secondary School Sports Association (USSSA) Ball Games climaxed on May 7 at Sero-ma Christian High School with 10 various disciplines having their rankings concluded.

Pool rugby 15s was at the centre of the closing ceremony but earlier, there were finals in hockey, basketball 5x5, badminton, tennis, and table tennis at various venues in the U-20 category while the U-17s had volleyball, basketball 3x3, netball, and handball.

The good

The games were widely spread across Mukono district with the fields of play and courts largely in good condition even on rainy days. From Namilyango to Seroma, there were also alternative routes to help school bus drivers avoid the traffic jam on the Kampala - Jinja highway.

Seroma accommodated the girls but also hosted basketball games for both the U-20s (5x5) and U-17s (3x3), badminton, table tennis, plus the opening and closing ceremonies.

They partnered with Uganda Christian University (UCU) to host basketball, tennis, girls' football, plus U-17 handball and volleyball.

Naminyango College, where the boys stayed hosted rugby 15s and hockey while Our Lady of Africa SS hosted the U-17 netball.

Girls' football had various venues including Seeta-University, Seeta High School Mbalala, Seeta High School - A Level Campus, Nakijunga Stadium, Bishops Seconda-

OH NO!

Before the girls' hockey final, Bweranyangi players stormed the pitch to stop the match between Kakungulu Memorial and Mt. St. Mary's College Namagunga. Bweranyangi claimed that Kakungulu downed tools to let Gayaza off-set a five goal difference in the group stages. It did not help matters that the coaches of Kakungulu and Gayaza play for the same club. The result, an unimagnifiable 6-1 win for Gayaza, eliminated Bweranyangi and allowed the latter to make the semi-finals where they lost.

ry School, Our Lady of Africa, Bishops West Primary School, Hilton High School, St. Thereza Girls Primary School, Bishops East Primary School, and Namityango Boys Primary School. Capacity building officials In some disciplines like handball, basketball, rugby, netball, and football, USSSA has empowered officials from their capacity building programme to take charge of games.

Despite the pressure of the games, most of them have performed excellently thereby helping USSSA and res-

Towering. Tinah Mabel of St Francis Busunju out-jumps her opponent during a netball game against Mt St Henry's Mpigi. St Francis won the contest 28-15.

pective federations grow their officiating capacities.

Accreditation

Over the duration of the Games that started on April 29, the hosting schools tried to ensure the traffic flowing in to them could be identified. It was not a consistent effort but a good start that USSSA have to continue with to control the indiscipline surrounding their games.

Competitive

The Games still have dominant sides in certain disciplines but competition is picking up in some. Kibuli SS like last year in Bukedea dominated tennis, table tennis, and badminton - only letting the girls' badminton title go to Mbogo High for the last 10 years. Kakungulu Memorial girls have won the for 10 also hockey title

also
hockey title
years.

But in boys' hockey, Ntare School lost a third straight final as Kakungulu took the title won by Mbarara High School last year. In boys' rugby, Jinja SS stopped the three year dominance of King's College Budo after beating them.

in the semifinals before beating St. Mary's College Kistubi in the final. Basketball 3x3 was played at Ball Games II at U-20 level in Tororo last year and won by St. Noa and Amus College in the girls' and boys' categories respectively. But this year the inaugural U-17 titles went to hosts Seroma and St. Michael High School Ssonde.

Amus College continued to dominate boys' basketball 5x5 but the see-saw rivalry between last year's winners St. Noa and St. Mary's Kitende, who were the best team this year, continued. Meanwhile girls' netball had an U-16 event won by Madinah Islamic last year but this year it was changed to U-17 with St. Mary's Kitende triumphant.

Volleyball too was at U-16 level and won by Bukedea Comprehensive in both girls' and boys' categories but this year, Standard High Zana has taken the boys' title.

The bad

While the action is largely pleasing to watch, the Games are still not close to people so barely have fans away from the participating students. They are confined in schools away from the public and since they happen during the school holiday, even the non-participating students cannot watch.

While hosting schools are big beneficiaries in terms of infrastructure investment, the

overall impact of the Games on the communities hosting them is hard to quantify.

Distances nightmare

While access was easy for participants through their buses. The press and any other interested parties, especially those using public means, had to bear the brunt of the distances between venues which ranged from eight to 20km. The traffic jam meant that the Games were more accessible by boda-boda. The boda apps show that fares from Bweyogerere to Namilyango or Seroma ranged from ShS5,000 to ShS15,000.

Results are still an issue. Interestingly, while USSSA have a rather active website and social media pages, there is no centralized platform for detailed results. Summarized results are easily accessible on social media but one still has to be on ground to access test scores of a volleyball game or the scorers in a football game. Don't bother looking for details from racket games.

Fixture changes

At the time of filing this report, girls' football was yet to be concluded. Before the start of the competition, there were undertones that girls' football would pause at the quarter-finals to allow the schools that had key players in the national U-20 team involved in a World Cup Qualifier against Ghana.