

Express suspensions: A crisis that could rebuild an old giant

Clubs in Rwanda solved scandals by paying playing salaries on time.



Hamzah Jjunju
Match fixing



Express FC, founded in 1957, is not just one of Uganda's oldest football institutions but a historic powerhouse that has won six Uganda Premier League titles and produced generations of players for the national team.

For decades, the club has symbolized passion, identity, and resilience in Kampala, with its home at Wankulukuku Stadium and later Hamz Stadium serving as a fortress of red pride and loyal support.

Yet today, that legacy faces one of its most serious tests following suspensions tied to match manipulation allegations involving the chief executive officer and two players.

The intervention by the Federation of Uganda Football Associations (Fufa) Ethics and Disciplinary Committee signals a shift toward stricter enforcement

of integrity in Ugandan football.

Fufa, originally formed in 1924 and restructured to align with modern football governance, has in recent years introduced club licensing rules, financial compliance standards, and ethics frameworks aimed at professionalizing the game.

However, the Express crisis reveals that enforcement at club level still lags behind policy ambition, especially where leadership structures are weak or overly centralized.

At many Ugandan clubs, executive authority often overlaps with technical football decisions, creating conflicts of interest that open doors to mismanagement and corruption.

Match fixing is the illegal, prearranged manipulation of a sports competition's outcome or specific events (e.g., penalties, cards) to secure an unfair advantage, often for betting-related financial gain.

This is where Express must learn from successful African models such as Mamelodi Sundowns, where clearly defined roles, layered management, and strict reporting systems have built both success and integrity.

Adopting such governance reforms would not only restore order at Express but also set a benchmark for the Uganda Premier League.

Equally urgent is the need to protect players through structured education, as many footballers across East Africa remain vulnerable to manipulation due to limited awareness.



Implicated. Preliminary findings reveal that Mike Mutyaba, then-Express assistant coach, coordinated with others to orchestrate the outcome of a game between Express and Kitara in Hoima in December, 2024 with the latter winning 7-0. The file has been sent to the Police to process. PHOTO/COURTESY

Match-fixing syndicates often exploit financial pressure, offering quick money or using intimidation to influence outcomes.

Evidence from leagues in Kenya and Nigeria shows that mandatory integrity workshops, reporting systems, and direct engagement with players can significantly reduce such cases.

For Express, embedding this education into club culture must become non-negotiable.

Financial instability is another long-standing weakness that cannot be ignored, as delayed salaries have plagued many Ugandan clubs for years.

When players go unpaid, integrity becomes fragile, and the risk of external influence increases sharply.

Clubs in Rwanda responded to similar scandals by prioritizing timely salaries, housing support, and player welfare programs, resulting in improved discipline and loyalty.

Express must follow this path if it is to rebuild both performance and trust.

Supporters, who form the heartbeat of the club, also deserve consistent and transparent communication during this crisis.

While the club's initial statement confirming cooperation with investigations was a positive step, sustained openness will determine whether fans remain engaged or drift away.

Regular updates, honest acknowledgment of failures, and clear reform plans can help rebuild the emotional bond between the club and its base.

Looking ahead, long-term stability lies in youth development, where values of discipline, professionalism, and integrity can be instilled early.

Ugandan rivals like Vipers have shown that structured academies can produce not only talented players but also responsible professionals.

By investing in youth systems, Express can secure a cleaner and more sustainable future. This moment also reflects a wider challenge across African football, where rapid growth and commercialization have outpaced governance structures.

Regulators like Fufa are increasingly stepping up, but clubs must match that effort with internal reforms and accountability.

Handled correctly, this crisis could become a turning point not just for Express FC but for the entire Ugandan game.

Football history is full of clubs that emerged stronger after scandal, provided they embraced real change rather than superficial fixes.

Express now stands at a defining crossroads, where decisive action can either restore its legacy or deepen its decline. By fixing governance, educating players, ensuring financial stability, embracing transparency, and investing in youth, the Red Eagles can rise again.

If they succeed, Express will not only reclaim its place at the top of Ugandan football but also set a powerful example for clubs across Africa.

The writer is a certified football administrator and manager