

Sports

Motorsport

Proud The Kenyan rally crew CRS Racing Team comprising Jasmeet Chana and Ravi Chana needed a fruitful trip to Uganda. **P38**



Final pages

Fading. Vipers limp into this defining encounter with just two wins in their last 10 matches in all competitions, a run littered with frustrating draws, blunt attacking displays and growing discontent.

BY DENIS BBOSA

STARTTIMES UGANDA PREMIER LEAGUE

Today, 4pm

Police	vs. Entebbe UPPC
UPDF	vs. Calvary
Bul	vs. Kitara
Mbarara City	vs. Buhimba United
Maroons	vs. Vipers
URA	vs. KCCA
Express	vs. Lugazi, 8pm

The stage is perfectly set for a potentially explosive climax to the Uganda Premier League season, with today's fixtures carrying enough weight to decide both the destination of the title and the identity of teams headed for the trapdoor before the final curtain falls on May 23.

At the summit, table leaders Vipers stand on the brink of history. The Venoms, on 61 points after 28 matches, know victory against Maroons at Wankulukuku Stadium will effectively crown them eight-time league champions. For all the turbulence currently surrounding the club, this title charge has largely been built on the breathtaking early-season form that saw Ivan Minnaert's side brush aside opponents with ruthless efficiency while opening daylight at the top.

Yet football has a cruel way of exposing cracks at the business end of the campaign. Vipers limp into this defining encounter with just two wins in their last 10 matches in all competitions, a run littered with frustrating draws, blunt attacking displays and growing fan discontent. Their Uganda Cup exit to Kitara only deepened the sense of crisis around Kitende and intensified questions over Minnaert's future at the notoriously axe-happy club. The Belgian tactician remains unbeaten on the pitch in the league, but momentum has undeniably shifted. What once looked like a procession has become a nerve-jangling sprint, allowing KCCA to sniff an opportunity that seemed dead and buried weeks ago.

Prayer

A stone's throw away at Nakivubo Stadium, the 13-time champions face a delicate assignment against URA knowing any-

thing less than victory could finally extinguish their lingering hopes.

Brian Ssenyondo and Jackson Magera have overseen a spirited late-season revival, with KCCA recently piling pressure on Vipers after dramatic wins, including the gritty 2-1 comeback over UPDF in Bombo. Still, URA are no pushovers. Sitting 11th on 27 points, the Tax Collectors possess enough steel and experience to play party spoilers - just as they heartbreakingly did to SC Villa on the final day of the 2022/23 season.

KCCA must therefore keep their foot on the pedal while praying Vipers stumble once more against bogey side Maroons, 10th with 35 points.

Importantly, the UPL title race could still swing on the league's head-to-head rule should Vipers and KCCA finish level on points after the final two matchdays. In that scenario, the Venoms would prevail courtesy of their superior record against KCCA - a 1-0 victory at Kitende and a 1-1 draw at Lugogo.

Six-pointer

Away from the glamour at the top, survival battles could also reach boiling point. Thirteenth-placed Mbarara City, on 23 points, host bottom side Buhimba United in a fixture that could mathematically condemn the visitors to relegation. Ironically, uncertainty still lingers over whether Buhimba will even honour the match after failing to travel for their fixture against Nec last week.

Elsewhere, another high-stakes relegation shootout unfolds in Bombo where UPDF, third from bottom on 21 points, host immediate neighbours Calvary, who sit on 17 points. It is a classic six-pointer with survival on the line.

From title glory to relegation despair, today promises a football feast where heroes could emerge, dreams could shatter and the league table may never look the same again.

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POINTS GAP



A.W.O.L.
Vipers midfielder Abdul Karim Watambala (front) must find the gear that's been missing lately.
PHOTO/JOHN BATANUDEDE



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