

BY MAKHTUM MUZIRANSA

Debut. The pilot project will have 10 teams from Fufa's Kampala Region and another 10 from Buganda Region with the success story of this first edition set to inform plans for expansion in the future.

FUFA ACADEMIES LEAGUE Team per Region

Kampala: Maroons, Edwards Youth Programme, Kampala Junior Team, Ks. Sparta 09, Prosper, Isra, Teletubbies Kids, Pase Pase, Proline, Kayda
Buganda: Vipers, Rays of Grace, El Cambio, St. Mary's Kitende, Msingi, Buddo, Watoto Twinbrook, Kyaddondo, Ebenezer

Tournament Organizing Committee: Ronald Barente (chairman), Roberts Kiwanuka (vice chairman), Farouk Kigongo, Rodrick Muhumuza, Yasser Mugerwa, Benjamin Ochon, Ronald Lwanga (members)
Fufa are set to start a league for local football academies in order to assess the development of players therein.

The new Fufa Academies League is expected to start this weekend and run for about six months. It will complement the Fufa Juniors League as some academies do not have teams playing there.

The pilot project will have 10 teams from Fufa's Kampala Region and another 10 from Buganda Region with the success story of this first edition set to inform plans for expansion in the future.

"The objective is to give children in development an opportunity to compete and showcase their progress," Fufa president Moses Magogo said during a press conference to launch the league at Fufa Stadium Kadiba on Monday where all participating teams also received 10 Zakayo balls from the federation.

Fufa academies league kicks off



First Cut. Fufa president Moses Magogo hands over balls to academy representatives. PHOTO/JOHN BATANUDDÉ

"It (the league) will also serve as a hunting ground for the National Football Academy and for coaches to identify players for the underage national teams," he further explained before adding that "competitions are means through which football communicates to the public."

The federation president expects no clash of roles, priorities, and interests as Fufa search through talents from various academies to feed its own.

"The purpose of our National Academy is to bring the best to train with the best players, coaches, and in the best environment. Remember, we are also

looking for national teams at the end of the day and Fufa intends to launch the U-15s football festival. It will be extremely hard for Fufa to select a team if the best do not train with each other sometimes.

"But there are also players that no academy will pick, so we will have to develop those ones."

"However, should Fufa really need a player, there will be systems of transfer that will be followed 100 percent. That means that the academy that owns a player will have to give consent."

Parents will have to get involved as these are minors. But also, our capacity

STANDARDISATION

Fufa also introduced a grading system for academies to ensure quality standards in youth development. Grade One represents the National Football Academy, which Fufa will re-launch as part of the Technical Master Plan. Grade Two academies mainly operate at professional clubs and qualified private institutions. Grade Three academies operate largely at the regional level and include schools of excellence. Only academies with a valid Fufa license can participate. Teams must register a maximum of 25 players born in 2011 and 2012, with mandatory player documentation in order to provide a clear pathway.

is small - maybe we will train 30 players at a time and that is a very small number if you look at the academies we have," Magogo told *Weekend Monitor* on the side.

This idea, Fufa say, was part of their Technical Masterplan that was launched two years ago. A plan that focuses on the life cycle of a player starting from when the talent is identified - in a system where Fufa works with Fufa under the Talent Development Scheme - until when they retire either into football or other walks of life.

Elite plans

"After identifying the player, you go into elite development where for us to get a top professional, we have to be intentional in the things we do. The most critical period for talent identification occurs between the ages of nine and 11. At that stage, identified players progress through recognised football schools and licensed academies."

"We are already implementing this in line with the National Sports Act. It is now illegal to operate an academy or have a group of children without a licence from the National Council of Sports (NCS) and you cannot obtain that licence without the approval of Fufa," Magogo said.

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Opportunities

"We are happy with the new competition because we have a lot of young talent that needs these opportunities. That is why we are fielding two teams," coach Richard Wasswa, who represented St. Mary's Kitende and Vipers at the launch, said.

Roberts Kiwanuka, who runs Rays of Grace Academy but is also chairperson of Uganda Youth Football Association and now a member of the new league's organizing committee, said "the continuity in competition is the biggest win for us."