Yiga breaks barriers as para-athlete after years as Bugema team physio

By Faith Kiai

Alex Yiga is a familiar figure in the University Football League circles because of his role as the Bugema University team physiotherapist.

Being a team physio may not surprise many people, but Yiga attracts attention because he is a person with dwarfism. For years, he fulfilled his passion for sports through his work with the Bugema University team before he was encouraged to participate in sports himself in 2022.

"I was working as a physiotherapist for Bugema during the East African University Games in 2022 when I met coach James Ssenkungu at Ndejje. He told me there is a class in which I fall in para-athletics and that I could come and start training," Yiga said.

That moment marked the start of his journey as a para-athlete. Although he remains committed to supporting athletes in his roles as a nursing officer and physiotherapist, he realised he could also take part in a side of sport he had once thought was impossible for him.

This is why he is excited to curve out a niche for himself and others like him. On Saturday, during the first athletics trial of the season at Namboole, he competed in the men's T40 category where he participated in the javelin and shot-put events.

His season-opening marks were 20.2m in the javelin and 6.5m in the shot put. While these results may not seem particularly impressive, they have given Yiga confidence that he can improve as the season progresses.

"I am happy with my performance because I have taken some time without competing. I last prepared for the East African Paralympic Games in early 2025 but they were cancelled. I stopped preparing, and recently I met coach Ssenkungu again while I was working with the women's football team. He invited me to this national trial, which I used to test myself and start the season," he said.

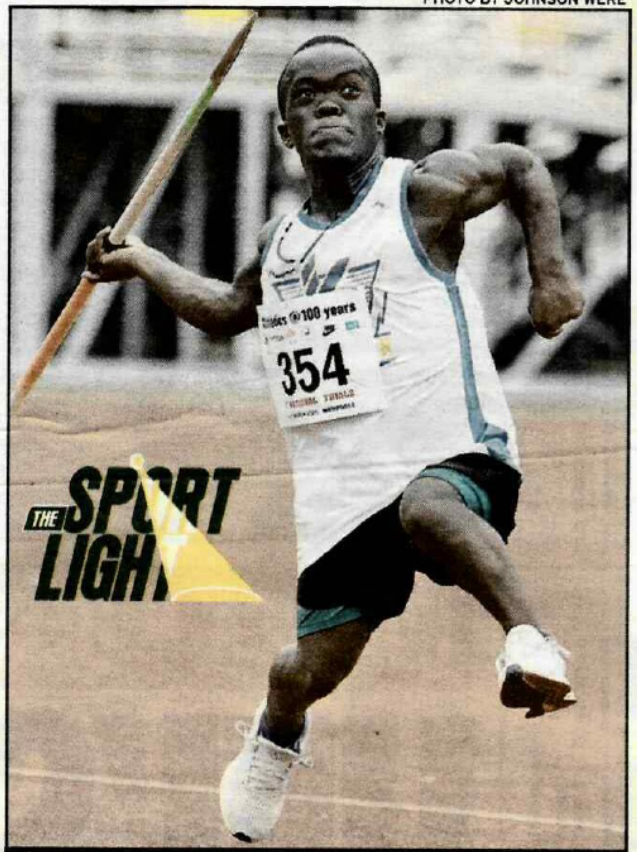
For Yiga, the last few years have been the realisation of a dream that once seemed almost impossible. Now he can proudly call himself a sportsman.

"I have always wanted to represent my country in sports. I also wanted my name to be known far and wide like Joshua Cheptegei's."

His journey has not been easy, but he has always wanted more for himself and for others like him.

"I have two aims. First, to build my profile so that people in sports know me. Secondly, we have so many people in our category but many remain hidden, and some parents even hide them. If people like me can come out and succeed in what we do, others will believe they also have a category where they can compete. If coach James had not told me, I would still be there without any idea. I would like to see the games opened up to more people like me." Yiga is determined to raise more awareness about people in his category and encourage many others to take up athletics.

PHOTO BY JOHNSON WERE



Yiga throws the Javelin during the 1st National Athletics trails

Stars gear up

By Julius Kafuluma

Uganda's young chess players are intensifying preparations for the upcoming Africa Youth Chess Championships by actively competing in local tournaments across the country.

Over the weekend, more than 100 players participated in the fifth edition of the Wampewo Open Chess Championship held at Wampewo Secondary School in Wakiso District.

The tournament focused on junior players aged 8-18, who competed in six age categories: U8, U10, U12, U14, U16 and U18.

Last year's Africa Individual Schools Chess Championship silver medallist Daniel Odokonyero dominated the junior category, winning all seven of his matches to finish with a perfect seven points. Treasure Muwanguzi and Mukisa Clark Trent followed in second and third place respectively after both finished with six points.

In the women's category,