

Taking women to the world of lacrosse

THE KNIGHT. Uganda Lacrosse Association (ULA) president, Ibrahim Makanda, believes his sport is ideal for women, so it is no wonder that many are learning it in secondary schools, writes **Bunnet Ayorekire.**

Briefly tell us about yourself.

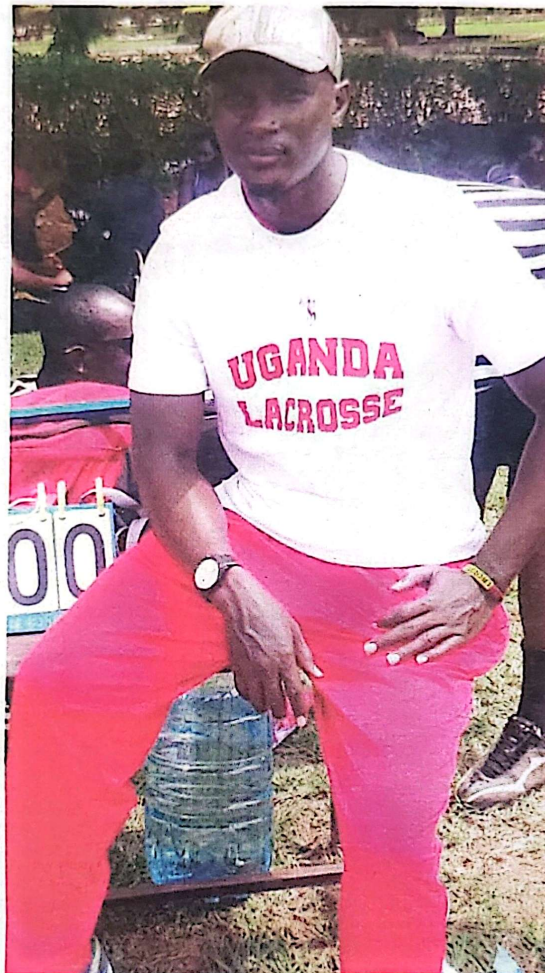
I'm the pioneer of Lacrosse in Uganda. Maurice Serunkuma who was the general secretary, Uganda Lacrosse Union (ULU) before its name was changed to ULA, introduced me to the sport. Throughout pursuing this sport as my career, I managed to be part of the team that represented Uganda in the 2014 World Cup in Denver, United States of America. Further, I managed to be part of the Franchise team that played in Israel with another player, Kenneth Kasuule, for the Ashkelon Lacrosse club.

Plus, I am part of the enthusiastic team that is striving hard to grow the game in East Africa and Africa at large.

How are you growing the sport?

Currently, we are implementing many such as developments: we have clubs like Jinja Lacrosse Club (Nile Zulus), MUBS, YMCA team, Panthers Lacrosse, to say the least. Also, at the beginning of this year, we decided to recruit girls to this same sport thus starting the women's clubs too that embody Maroons (Luzira Prison team), MUBS, Namagunga and Canaan.

Nabisunsa, Old Kampala and St Joseph's Nsambya are about to join. Regarding the school section, we have organised tournaments that will facilitate players to improve on



their skills, confidence and the abundant love for the sport. We have also organised the East Africa 7s tournament. This is the second time we are conducting such a tournament with a category of under 20 which will be hosted at the Jinja Rugby grounds on August today, this year. We have partners that help us support the game such as FGA (Fellowship for Christian Athletes) in USA which was founded by Frank Kelly III and family.

Are women interested in Lacrosse?

Yes, we are witnessing more girls participating in schools in comparison to the opposite sex. But we expect to balance it up progressively. However, men's clubs seem more active.

What needs to be done to improve the sport?

Improving this sport is based on capacity building, especially enhancing the coaches' clinics. This also facilitates sports continuity.

Is there a women's national team? Mention some star members.

There is a national team under U19 that is going to play in the East Africa 7s. We have many options when selecting a national team. We

ABOUT THE SPORT

Lacrosse is a sport where a long-handled stick known as a lacrosse is used by the players to catch, pass and tactfully score the lacrosse ball into the opponents' goal. This sport entails diverse sections that require different stick sizes, rules and regulations, fields and the necessary equipment: men's lacrosse field, women's lacrosse, box lacrosse and intercross. The lacrosse team comprises seven to 10 players on the field or court.

have star players such as Dora Nakato who has played this sport for more than six years. Currently she is coaching the Kenyan teams.

What strides has the women's team made so far?

Uganda is hosting the East Africa lacrosse tournament this year; and girls are a big contribution with plans to take part in the U19 2019 World Cup.

What advice do you have for women who want to take up the sport?

Lacrosse is an adorable team sport, and the federation of international lacrosse (FIL) is looking to empowering women through this sport. Generally, this is a global sport and it is possible and easy to shine in a growing sport.

What influences a good tournament?

It is mainly upon the organisation; this comes with efficient and effective communication, resource availability, and patently team discipline matters a lot.

What is the future of Lacrosse here?

We are struggling to see lacrosse become one of the leading sports in Uganda by enhancing strong motives in our players. Also, we are aiming at helping FIL register again in the Olympics by us getting involved in developing the game in our neighbouring countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and others; hence creating regional growth and excitement upon this same sport.

What word of advice do you have for the youth out there who look forward to pursuing the lacrosse sport as their career?

For any sports person to be successfully involved in sports, they must be flexible. So, you must train with vigour to be physically fit to play adorable lacrosse.

Of course not forgetting that playing lacrosse professionally is one way someone would earn a living; it is a great source of income.