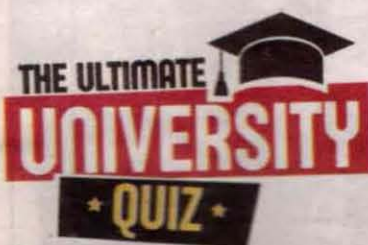


GULU, BUSITEMA PREPARE FOR THIRD-PLACE PLAY-OFFS UNIVERSITY CHALLENGE: NDEJJE, UCU STORM FINALS

PHOTO BY MIRIAM NAMUTESI



By Dallen Namugga

Uganda Christian University (UCU) and Ndejje University sealed their places in the grand finale of the Ultimate University Quiz Season Three after commanding victories in their respective semi-final clashes over the weekend.

The two tightly contested games, held last Saturday and Sunday, delivered drama, high-pressure moments and decisive swings that left viewers glued to their screens.

The tournament is now headed toward a blockbuster showdown this Thursday, where UCU and Ndejje will go head-to-head for the trophy.

Defending champions Gulu University and Busitema University, both defeated in the semis, will contest in the third-place play-offs.

UCU ENDS GULU TITLE DEFENCE

Saturday's semifinal between UCU and Gulu University opened with electric energy as the two stepped onto the stage, each introduced as a formidable force by the quiz mistress, Lydia Lakwonyero.

Round One, covering general knowledge and literature, set the early pace. The teams exchanged correct answers at remarkable speed, drawing level at 80-80. The studio atmosphere felt tight, controlled, because the two sides circled each other with equal force.

Momentum shifted in Round Two (Science). UCU capitalised on Gulu University's missteps, responding with composed precision. By the round's end, UCU had edged ahead 170-150, forcing the defending champions into chase mode.

Round Three (Sports and Entertainment) offered glimmers of a comeback. Gulu University impressed with stand-out responses, including correctly identifying the lead actress in *Evita*. However, UCU remained unfazed, keeping the 20-point gap intact at 260-240.

Then came the decider, Round Four, the high-stakes rapid-fire segment. UCU went first and delivered a near-perfect run, confidently answering questions spanning global politics, post-colonial governance and world history. Their poise earned them a clean sweep.

Gulu University, stepping in under visible pressure, managed several good answers, among them correctly naming the US president assassinated in 1963. However, their consistent



Lakwonyero (centre) with Gulu University students (left) and Uganda Christian University students (right) before facing off in the Ultimate University Quiz Season Three, semi-final clashes over the weekend

BETWEEN THE LINES

Sunday's semifinal brought a different rhythm, tense, fast, and punctuated by bursts of brilliance from both Ndejje University and Busitema University.

hesitation cost them crucial marks. Missed opportunities turned the round against them and with it, the entire game. By the final buzzer, UCU had stretched their lead to 360-250. A visibly relieved UCU bench walked back to centre-stage as the quiz mistress described them as "a very relieved team," before acknowledging Gulu University as "a very tough team."

The defending champions bowed out gracefully, ending a spirited title defence. The victory sent UCU straight into the Season Three finals, where the trophy now sits within reach.

NDEJJE OUTCLASSES BUSITEMA

Sunday's semifinal brought a different rhythm, tense, fast and punctuated by bursts of brilliance from both Ndejje University and Busitema University. As the contestants stepped onto the stage for Game 16, Lakwonyero raised the stakes immediately, reminding the audience that only one team would punch their ticket to face UCU.

Round One, rooted in African geography and historical civilisations, ended in a narrow 70-60 lead for Ndejje. The crowd erupted when Ndejje confidently named Algeria as Africa's largest country by land area.

Busitema University countered with



Ndejje University students (in purple T-shirts) being congratulated by Busitema University students

sharp answers on ancient kingdoms and lusophone nations, but Ndejje maintained its slim edge.

Round Two (General Knowledge) intensified the clash. Busitema University struck first with a clean answer identifying saffron as the world's most expensive spice. Ndejje responded with crisp precision, naming the Vatican as the only country with no recorded births since 1929. Both sides traded impressive answers, France having the most time zones, *Avatar* as the highest-grossing film and the ironic meaning of "hippopotomonstrosesquipedaliophobia."

The round closed with Ndejje pulling away 180 to Busitema's 120 points.

Round Three (Science) widened the gap further. Ndejje opened with flawless answers, including confirming that sharks contain zero bones. Busitema rallied with confident responses on chemical bonds, alloys, and brain anatomy, showing deep

scientific knowledge.

However, Ndejje's consistency answers like refraction, acidity levels, Venus' temperature and the appendix's role pushed them to 280 points against Busitema's 220. With a 60-point difference heading into the final round, both teams carried visible pressure.

Round Four (Sports) started with Ndejje University delivering sharp responses on American football, NBA scoring records and women's football history. They stumbled twice, but recovered quickly.

Busitema University pushed back with solid points on Olympic history, Premier League records and Brazil's World Cup victories. However, critical misses, particularly on Council for East and Central Africa Football Association's newest member, kept them from closing the gap. By the final whistle, Ndejje University stood firm at 340-280, securing their place

SPONSORS AND PRIZES

The quiz, which featured 18 universities, is sponsored by Bank of Uganda, together with Uganda Communications Commission, National Environment Management Authority, Parliament of Uganda and Harris International. The winner will take home sh25m worth of equipment, while the four participants and their coach will each receive sh1m and a new laptop. The second-place winner will receive sh15m, with each of the four participants taking a cash prize of sh500,000 and a laptop, while the third-place winner will take sh10m and each participant will receive a cash prize of sh300,000 along with a tablet. Each participant and coach, including those who drop out in the first game get sh200,000.

in Thursday's finals. As applause filled the studio, Lakwonyero congratulated both sides: "You've brought your A-game." The teams shook hands, mutual respect closing a spirited intellectual battle.

BROADCAST

The nine-week contest has been airing every weekend on all Vision Group television stations. The finals and third-place playoffs are slated for Thursday at 7:30pm.