

# Teen Okello shocks elite field to lift legendary Oduke trophy

**Prodigy.** Fourteen-year-old ambidextrous sensation Samuel Okello delivered the performance of his young career as he dismantled some of Uganda's most celebrated national tennis team stars to win the week-long John Oduke Legendary Tennis Tournament at the Lugogo Tennis Complex at the weekend.

BY INNOCENT NDAWULA

## THE JOHN ODUKE TENNIS LEGENDARY TOURNAMENT

### Finals - Men's Singles

Samuel Okello **bt.** Troy Zziwa  
6-1, 6-3

### Results - Semifinals

Samuel Okello **bt.** David Oringa  
0-4, 4-2, 13-11

Troy Zziwa **bt.** Davis Acire  
4-2, 4-1

### Quarterfinals

Samuel Okello **bt.** Daniel Ruyange  
4-0, 4-2

David Oringa **bt.** Sammy Muruki  
4-2, 4-2

Davis Acire **bt.** Simon Ayella  
3-5, 3-1 **Ret.**

Troy Zziwa **bt.** Prince Rutenta  
4-1, 4-0

### Men's Doubles Final

S. Ayella & D. Oringa **bt.** T. Zziwa & Saidi Mawa  
6-2, 6-3

### Women Singles Final

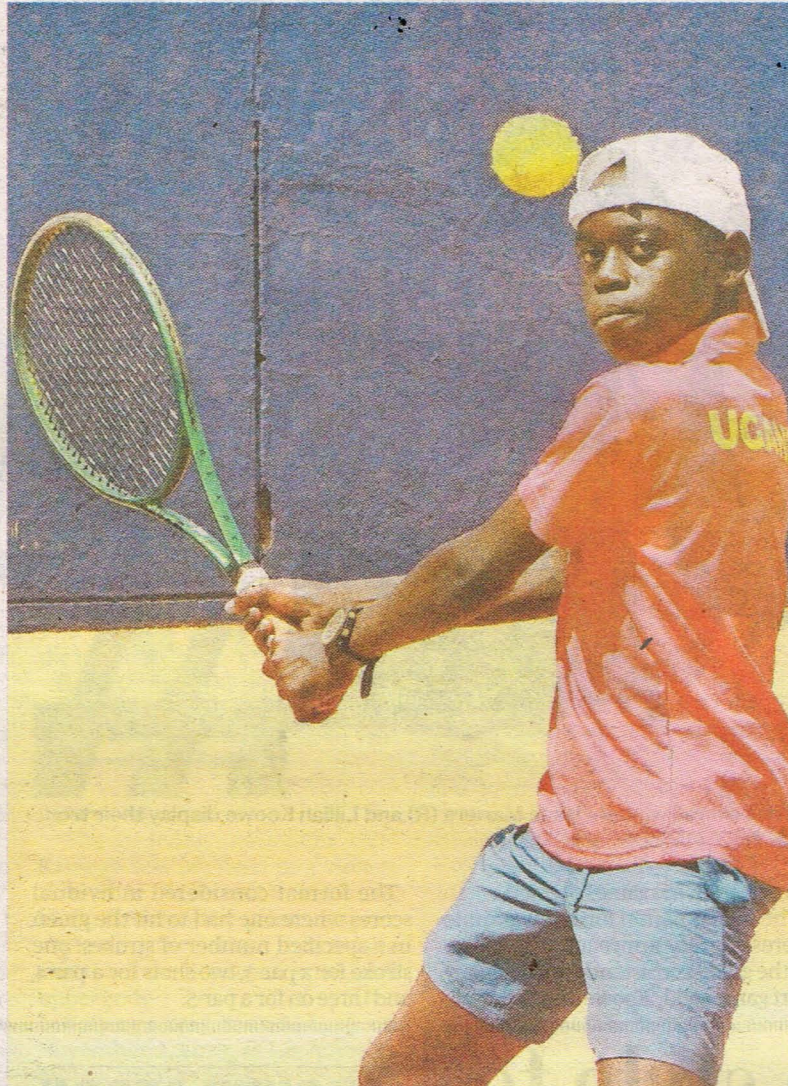
Patience Athieno **bt.** Hilder Afeyorwoth  
6-3, 6-0

It was a tournament meant to celebrate a legend, but by the end of the week, all eyes were fixed on a new star. Fourteen-year-old ambidextrous talent Samuel Okello produced a stunning run to claim the 2025 John Oduke Legendary Tournament, outclassing older, stronger and vastly more experienced opponents with a coolness far beyond his years.

The men's singles draw attracted 32 players, while the women's event had eight entrants and the men's doubles eight teams. But the week belonged to the teenage dynamo who played with style, courage and a refreshing tactical maturity that lit up the Lugogo Club.

### Historic stage

This was the third edition of the competition held in honour of John Oduke, the Ugandan icon who won a record 12



**One Way Up.** Uganda's fast-climbing left-hander Samuel Okello, fresh from winning the 2025 John Oduke Legendary Tournament, continues to underline his elite potential with a growing list of ITF and regional titles that mark him out as the country's next major tennis export. PHOTOTO/COURTESY-UTA

Uganda Open titles, a feat untouched in local tennis history. His sons — Simon Peter Ayella and Davis Acire — continued the family legacy by competing with passion, and their quarterfinal clash delivered one of the tournament's most emotional moments.

Acire forced his elder brother to retire while trailing 3-5, 3-1, ending a spirited battle that thrilled the crowd and kept

the Oduke name central to the event's storyline.

### Youngster rules

But even these dramatic moments could not overshadow Okello's blossoming brilliance.

He became the talk of the tournament after a composed 4-0, 4-2 quarterfinals victory over former Davis Cup and

Cricket Cranes bowler Daniel Ruyange to announce himself as a contender.

The semifinals brought his defining moment — a nerve-shredding showdown with Davis Cup star David Oringa. Okello lost the first set 0-4, regrouped to take the second 4-2, and then played the match of his life to edge a pulsating super-tiebreak 13-11.

The crowd erupted. Lugogo had found its new favourite.

In the final, Okello showed no nerves as he dismantled Troy Zziwa 6-1, 6-3, sealing a historic title run and becoming the tournament's youngest-ever champion.

### Legends & lessons

There was consolation for the Oduke household when Ayella partnered Oringa to win the men's doubles title, beating Zziwa and Saidi Mawa 6-2, 6-3 with ease.

In women's singles, Patience Athieno sealed the title after beating Hilder Afeyorwoth 6-3, 6-0.

But the central story remained the teenager who stepped into a legendary spotlight and owned it.

Okello trains at Lugogo under Edward Odocken, the national head coach and an ITF Level 2 expert. His structured pathway — three intense training sessions weekly plus strength, conditioning and psychology — is the foundation of his rapid rise.

His international exposure, including ITF/CAT events and continental finals, has sharpened a competitive edge that few players his age possess.

### Star of tomorrow

Okello, who is currently ranked 2611 on the ITF World Tennis Number (ITF WTN) with a career-high of 2327, continues to attract national attention. This title will no doubt accelerate his rise among Africa's next-gen tennis prospects.

"I am very happy I have won this tournament. Beating Oringa felt very good. I thank my coach and COLTA for giving me the training that has put me at this level. My mother will be very happy," Okello said with a wide smile after lifting the trophy that left many big names stunned into silence.