

Table tennis: GMS, Nakasero earn victory at Uganda Open

Title Shift. The Open delivered gripping theatre at Kabojja, with GMS School and Nakasero TT Club sharing the top shelves of glory in a week that showcased fierce rivalries and the ever-growing depth of the sport across age groups. From the emotional men's team final to Nakasero's sweeping dominance!

BY ABDUL NASSER SSEMUGABI

2025 UGANDA OPEN

SELECT MEDALISTS - U-13 BOYS

Silver: Ivan Migirizi

Gold: Joseph Sebatindira

U-13 GIRLS

Silver: Judith Mirembe

Gold: Patience Anyango

VETERANS MEN

Silver: Jude Mutete

Gold: Edward Koboyi

VETERANS WOMEN

Silver: Hope Kobusingye

Gold: Amina Lukaaya

OPEN MEN

Silver: Sharif Nsereko

Gold: Joseph Sebatindira

OPEN WOMEN

Silver: Patra Nasirumbi

Gold: Jemimah Nakawala

TEAM EVENTS WOMEN

Silver: TT Kids

Gold: Nakasero

TEAM EVENTS MEN

Silver: Kibuli

Gold: GMS

MVPs

M: Joseph Sebatindira

W: Jemimah Nakawala



Victory Sweep. Nakasero Club's Nasirumbi (L), Nangonzi (C), and Nakawala celebrate as champions of the women's team events. PHOTO/ABDUL-NASSER SSEMUGABI

When Benjamin Acuma defeated world Under-11 champion Joseph Sebatindira 3-1, he jumped atop the table, spread his hands wide, smiling after an epic match against arguably Uganda's most gifted and exposed table tennis player currently.

Acuma's victory was an equaliser for Grand Maria School (GMS) Table Tennis Club in the men's team events final of the 2025 Uganda Open Championship against Kibuli Table Tennis Club—an offshoot of the dominant Nakasero Club. Joshua Magaya had just beaten Brian Mutua 3-2 to give Kibuli a 1-0 lead. Now after Acuma's equaliser, GMS started believing. To save time, the first three of five games were played simultaneously, which caused more tension

inside Kabojja International School's multipurpose hall and confusion to the players, coaches and fans who always shouted the players' names as a sign of motivation.

By the end of the first three games, GMS was leading 2-1 after Jonathan Ssenyonga edged Sharif Nsereko 3-2 in a tense game that infuriated the Nakasero/Kibuli fanbase when a presumably injured Ssenyonga posed, and retreated to his corner, touching his right shoulder, while leading the last game 7-3. He changed the jersey. "He's faking it, he's not injured," rival fans shouted.

Immediately action resumed, Nsereko scored. Then the youngster launched a ferocious attack forcing Ssenyonga to turn 360 degrees and scored his eighth point, triggering more fury. "Can an injured person do that? He's a liar," they shouted, as he clenched his fist. He won 12-10 as GMS led 2-1. Ssenyonga jumped

the barrier separating tables to high five and hug the GMS boss Cyrus Mwangi, who is also the Uganda Table Tennis Association president. Rival fans didn't like that as well.

No chance for Sebatindira

Now Mutua, who represented Kenya at the 2018 Commonwealth Games in Gold Coast, returned to the table, against Sebatindira, still nursing the loss to Acuma. His lean shoulders carried the burden of restoring his team's hope. "He must pay for the other's sins," Sebatindira's sister said of Mutua. But the experienced Kenyan, who has recently been training in China, gave the little boy no chance. He thrashed him 3-0, as GMS, 3-1 winners jumped in glory. "After my teammates won their games, I felt like I was the one letting them down. So I had to win by all means," said Mutua. Allan Sing'ar, who

coached GMS, added: "I told Brian 'play the way you do when training.'"

GMS's victory was a speed bump to the Nakasero base which had dominated most categories. Jemimah Nakawala, Parvin Judith Nangonzi and Patra Nasirumbi had just defeated TT Kids' Judith Kirabira, Judith Mirembe and Brenda Namukose 3-0 in the women's team events final. Nakawala defeated Nasirumbi in the women's singles final 3-0, while Sebatindira defeated Nsereko 3-0 in the men's singles final.

Sebatindira and Patience Anyango, also from Nakasero, also won the Under-13 boys' and girls' titles, with Sebatindira and Nakawala picking the MVP awards.

Sam Turya, the principal Kabojja, commended UTTA for a smart and marvelous organisation of the event, and assured: "Kabojja is open to hosting you for as long as you want."

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