



**POA**  
GOLF SERIES



# Pearl of Africa Golf Series 2025



POA Golf Series Limited

# EDITOR'S WORD

## SEEKING A DIFFERENCE



**Mark  
Namanya**

When the Pearl of Africa Golf series were launched in late January this year, the questions were many. But after a hugely successful inaugural leg at Uganda Golf Club, the questions are a lot fewer.

The tournament's identity is very much in the name – Pearl of Africa. The idea is to transform golf in Uganda, both from within and out. The series have been specifically designed to elevate the competition of the country's best amateurs and professionals, who are often hampered by a lack of tournament experience when facing the best in the region.

It is why we deliberately made it a competition to be played on the different 18-hole courses in the country. With the UGC chapter done for this year, next in line is the par-71 Entebbe Golf Club which will obviously pose a different challenge to Kitante competition. In July, we shall wind up the next at the par-72 Lugazi Hills Golf & Country Club.

For years, the game in this country has tended to give more prominence to social golfers at the expense of the elite amateurs and professional golfers. It is a huge oddity. Because like athletics that is defined by Joshua Cheptegei and Jacob Kiplimo and not the Kampala Hash House Harriers, golf's poster boys should be Marvin Max Kibirige and John Musimenta. Golf shouldn't be identified by mediocre Group B and C, slice-king amateurs.

The Pearl of Africa Golf series hope to change that narrative. The idea is to give the best golfers at amateur and professional level the finest competitive environment imaginable amongst themselves. Questions have been asked whether the series will allow golfers from the region to take part. The plan to have them take part is in advanced stages.

Beyond the game of golf, the Pearl of Africa series is pushing the campaign for environmental preservation, conservation and sustainability. The series will be a platform to push for effective waste management on the green belts all over the country, and similarly in various towns and communities.

Ultimately the POA are aimed at empowering the best golfers in the country. The dream and goal is to build their brands to a level where they can command corporate sponsorship to become faces of leading brands and companies. It has happened elsewhere and with the support of all stakeholders in the game, we believe that it can happen right here in the Pearl of Africa.

# POA FOUNDER

## *BIRTH OF THE SERIES*



**Juliet  
Anena**

The idea for the Pearl of Africa Golf Series (POA) took shape after witnessing the impact of the Magical Kenya Open 2024, reinforcing my belief that Uganda needed a similar platform to elevate professional and amateur golfers while showcasing our talent and culture. With the unwavering support of close friends, this vision turned into reality, leading to the inaugural POA tournament on February 5th-8th, 2025.

Ronald Rugumayo's playoff battle with Marvin Kibirige, the emergence of John Musimenta, and the remarkable performance of Irene Nakalembe, Meron Kyomugisha & Komugisha proved that POA was more than a competition—it was a movement fostering the next generation of golfers. Seeing the overwhelming participation and support reaffirmed that we are on the right path.

To my fellow ladies in golf: Play strong, embrace competition, and grow with POA. Golf is evolving, and we have a role to play in shaping its future. POA is not just about tournaments; it's about building a legacy, proving that women belong in this sport just as much as men.

POA is just getting started, and together, we will take it to even greater heights. See you on the tee box!  
**#PlayStrong #PearlofAfricaGolfSeries**

# POA CHAIRMAN

*IMPACTING ON SOCIETY*



**Dr Edward  
Nyatia**

Golfers and golf enthusiasts, I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to all lovers of the game in Uganda for the adoration and enthusiasm they exhibited when we held the first Pearl of Africa Golf Series at the Uganda Golf Club, Kitante from February 5-8.

Professionals, amateurs and subsidiary golfers turned up in large numbers to grace the inaugural event. I congratulate the winners and all the runners up for the special display of talent. Special tribute goes to the Uganda Golf Union (UGU) headed by Dr. Jackson Were for supporting growth and innovation for the game of golf in Uganda.

Our objectives at POA among others is to provide opportunities for professional and amateur golfers to compete at the highest level, gain international recognition, and inspire the next generation of golfers.

We also aim to foster environmental sustainability by promoting waste management, community clean-ups, and environmental awareness at every POA event.

We acknowledge and thank the current sponsors for their invaluable support and call upon other organizations to partner with the series to expand its impact.

We believe in the power of collaboration to not only grow the sport of golf but also to make a meaningful impact in our society.

For the golfers that were left with an interminable appetite, see you at the next event due April 2-5, 2025 at Entebbe Golf Club.

Let us enjoy this historic moment in the beautiful game of golf.

# UGU PRESIDENT

THANK YOU VERY MUCH  
POA



**Dr Jackson  
Were**

In February, I was one of thousands of golf enthusiasts who closely monitored the inaugural Pearl of Africa Golf Series at Kitante.

Family commitments tied me up on the final day when Marvin Max Kibirige and Ronald Rugumayo took on one another in an absorbing finish that culminated in the former prevailing in the playoff.

I was impressed with the interest and passion that the Series generated and as the Uganda Golf Union, we can't thank the organisers of the Pearl of Africa Golf series enough.

The entry of the Pearl of Africa Golf series onto the calendar events of the game can only do golf in Uganda a world of good.

In fact, it is a measure of POA's success that the tournament has generated so much excitement so much so that most amateurs and professionals already know the exact dates of the next leg of the series.

As the Union, all forms of competitive golf are embraced with open arms. We want the country's best golfers to be in action all year round. We want the country's finest talents to be in competitive mode regularly.

We shall give the Pearl of Africa series all the necessary help and support because of the first-class organization they have exhibited.

Some of the sponsorship that has come for POA is because of the existing partnerships the Union signed with stakeholders in the game.

An example is NBS Sport, who are the broadcast partners of the Union and as such must work with the POA team to give the event the best possible coverage.

The Union is waiting with baited breath for the events in Entebbe and Lugazi for the 2025 season.

I intend to play in the subsidiary category of both legs, and I will consider it an honour.



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# Ten interesting facts about the beautiful game of golf



## HOLE SIZE

The standard golf hole, or cup, has a diameter of 4.25 inches or 108mm. The depth of the cup must be at least 4 inches as USGA and R&A rules and regulations. This size was standardized in 1891.

1



## GOLF BALL

The minimum diameter of a golf ball must not be less than 41.67mm. the weight of a golf ball must not exceed 45.93 grams.

2



## MAXIMUM CLUBS

A golfer can carry up to 14 clubs in his bag, as long as they conform to the rules of the game. Having more than 14 clubs results in penalties, which vary depending on the type of match (match play or stroke play).

3



## CONDOR

A condor is a hole-in-one on a par 5. It is more rare than snow in Kampala. Larry Bruce played one at Hope Country Club in Arkansas, cutting the corner on a dog-leg par-5 in 1962 - which is the year Uganda got independence.

4



## BACK-TO-BACK ACES

Frank Bensele Jr became a golf immortal when he shot back-to-back hole-in-ones during the second round of the US Senior Open on the Longcross Course at Foxhills Club and Resort in Rhode Island.

5

# Ten interesting facts about the beautiful game of golf



**80%**

This one will give hope to many. Almost 80% of all golfers never get to handicap 18. Do not give up if you are still in Group C. Get your pro and get back to the basics.

**6**



**DIMPLES**

Modern golf balls have 336 dimples, which help them travel farther and help create spin and rotation. A non-dimpled golf ball will only travel less than half the distance of a dimpled ball.

**7**



**420 MILLION**

This is the estimated number of golf balls that are lost every year. The bright side to this stat is that all golfers lose balls – professionals, amateurs and beginners. Take heart.

**8**



**BANNED SPORT**

In Scotland, the game was banned three times between 1457 and 1744 because the government believed that it was interfering with military training.

**9**



**PHIL MICKELSON**

The six-time major winner is a right-handed person, but he plays golf left-handed. Talk about being ambidextrous. In 2021, he became the oldest major championship winner in history at 50 years, 11 months and 7 days. He lifted the PGA Championship.

**10**



## Brian Toolit was an affable golfer who inspired amateurs and pros

Since his passing on March 15, Brian Toolit's story has been told and retold. What he accomplished at a tender age of 37 will last a lifetime. He was a gentle lad, a fine talent, and actually a very well-cultured human being. Like every society, friction always exists among people. But you never heard Toolit's name in anything of the kind.

The Gulu-born golfer, who spent most of his informative years in Jinja, learnt the game at Jinja Sports Club. Because the facility has a swimming pool and tennis court, Toolit was also accomplished in both. But it was golf which won his heart, and he would go on to become one of the best ball-strikers in the country.

Toolit won many trophies in his career, but most noteworthy are the people he won over. Being a gifted coach who could speak so many languages, Toolit was always busy on the range at Uganda Golf Club. He had a certain charm that endeared him to beginners, amateurs and fellow professionals.

He was soft-spoken, sociable and easy-going. When you saw Toolit, you felt a certain peacefulness in your presence. He exuded it all the time. When he first fell sick in April last year, his surgery at Nsambya Hospital was billed at Shs7m. The money was raised in no time, which was testament to the love golfers had for Toolit. In fact, more than Shs40m was generated.

Toolit was not just loved in Uganda; he was also a favourite of Kenyan golfers. Toolit was too good a human being not to like him. He was buried in his ancestral home of Gulu on March 17, 2025 but his contribution to the game will live on for eternity.

The Pearl of Africa Golf series will forever miss Brian Toolit.



**Albert Ahabwe . Andrew Kabuura. Brian Tuka. Vianney Nsimbe**

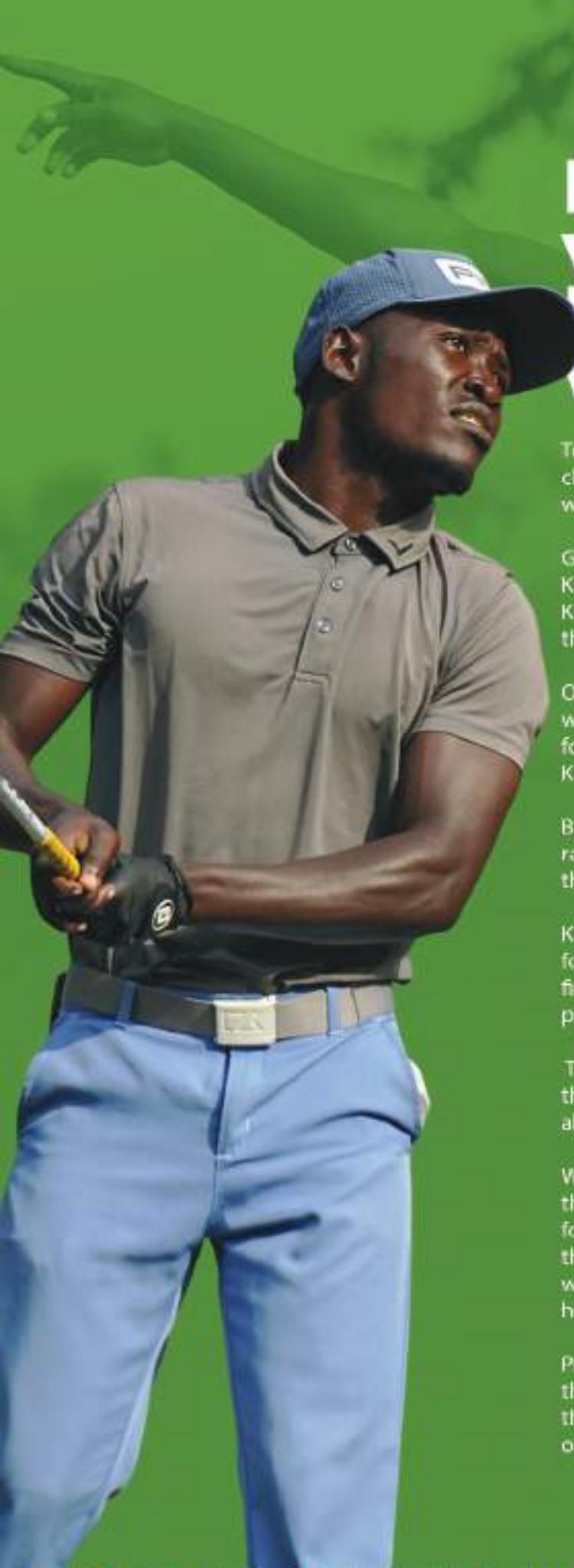
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# POA GOLF TOURNAMENT







# Kibirige's victory over Rugumayo was epic

Teeling the 17th hole, Marvin Max Kibirige had the championship in the bag. He held a three-stroke lead and was cruising.

Golf, however, can turn in an instant. And so it did. Kibirige missed the green while Rugumayo found it. Kibirige couldn't scramble to get the par-save, Mayo on the other hand got his to cut down the lead to two.

On the final tee, the pressure was still on Rugumayo. He was trailing by two and needed a two-stroke swing to force a playoff. To most observers, the championship was Kibirige's to lose.

But there is a reason why Rugumayo is Uganda's highest rated professional golfer today. He hit a crisp drive into the fairway while Kibirige entered the woods.

Kibirige would play out of the woods to sit on the green for three before carding a bogey while his rival played a fine approach short before holing a long birdie for a playoff.

The scenes on the 18th green were worth the money for the huge gallery that followed the pressure group that also included David Kamulindwa and Philip Kasozi.

With Rugumayo recovering from the dead to secure the three-stroke swing he needed in the final two holes to force a playoff, it meant that the destiny of the first leg of the Inaugural Pearl of Africa professional golf series would be decided in a sudden-death playoff. The first hole would be the stroke index 1 no.12.

Pressure moments like playoffs are typically decided by the golfer who handles his nerves better. And on this day, the younger Kibirige prevailed. But neither golfer holed out.

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# Musiimenta's 65 set tone for victory

Sometimes a tournament can indeed be won on the opening round. But for that to happen, a golfer must play the most perfect round of golf.

That is precisely what John Musiimenta did when he shot a superb 65 in the opening round of the gross amateurs' event at the par-72 Uganda Golf Club at Kitante.

Musiimenta holed 7 birdies and 11 pars to all but win the event. Granted, he still had 36 holes to play in the tournament but the 21-year-old didn't look the type that would crumble. Part of Musiimenta's strength is calmness whether playing well or not.

The closest score to Musiimenta's 65 was a level-par 72 from Ronny Okoti, the brother of Ronald Otile.

Day two was always going to be a different story and Musiimenta shot a five-over 77. The day's best rounds were delivered by Joseph Kasozi, a national team player, and Asuman Tumwesigye who both carded 74.

On the third and final day, there was a spirited chase from Jinja Club's Sande Lulet who carded a one-under 71. He was in the pressure group alongside Musiimenta and the latter knew that all he had to do was to maintain an arm's length from Lulet to secure a famous win.

In the end, Musiimenta held on for a four-shot victory which was the biggest of his career. He took home Shs1.7m, which was the lion's share of the amateurs kitty.

The other golfers who joined Musiimenta and Lulet in the money bracket were Morris Ashaba, Isaac Holly Ogwai, Ashvin Kananathan and Joseph Kasozi.

Musiimenta missed the Entebbe tournament because of academic commitments at Makerere University, where he is pursuing a course in electrical engineering.

In his absence, Michael Tumusiime, Elton Thembo, Samuel Bazaale, and Joseph Reagan Akena locked horns for the title.



# POA Award Ceremony 2025



## KIDS OF TODAY ARE THE ADULTS OF TOMORROW. LET US SUPPORT THEM

Organisers of the inaugural Pearl of Africa Golf series at Uganda Golf Club in February had every reason to celebrate a competition that was well-organised. That it produced popular winners in Marvin 'Max' Kibirige and John Musimenta was an icing on the cake.

However, there was nothing in store of the juniors. While the subsidiary category catered for all amateur golfers, and the main competition was hogged by the professionals and gross amateurs, there was always a lingering feeling that the event was missing something.

With the juniors now on board, the Pearl of Africa series in Entebbe will possibly be one of the events of the year. The youngsters who travelled to Mt Kipipiri Golf Resort have already shown that they are neither intimidated by reputation or big names.

On Saturday, a select team of juniors will play the par3 no.10 in a group of professionals. If any one of the juniors were to strike his or her ball closest to the pin, he would be in the running for an assortment of trophies and prizes.

The tournament director Anthony Agaba, who is also vice president of the Uganda Golf Union, is expecting a stiff duel between the professionals and amateurs.

"As the Union, we believe that exposing them when young can enhance their golf game a great deal. We believe that in promoting POA, the local golf governing body is doing a decent job of joining hands with a team that understands and appreciates where the game must go."

Until recently, Tooro Golf Club in Fort Portal had been the hotbed of new talent in Uganda. But Lugazi Hills Golf & Country Club have grown meteorically and are home to the country's most gifted juniors.

In the Victoria Cup for example, nearly half of the team traced their roots to Lugazi. Other clubs would do well to see what Lugazi is doing differently.

  
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# Uganda

## Golf Club

### **UGC's identity is the Kitante stream**

Established in 1908, Uganda Golf Club is the country's premier course. Located in the heart of the capital city, it commands the largest membership and likewise enjoys most reciprocations with clubs outside Uganda. UGC is a course with up and down fairways, some unique lies of the ball and a stream that runs through the entire course. That stream is called Kitante. It runs from the Mulago side of the course and is in play on holes 15, 12, 11, 10, 3 and 5. If you are not careful, the stream which is a hazard can swallow your ball on holes 14, 13 and 8. UGC is a par-72 course whose hardest hole is the par-4 no.12. Many championship aspirations have died on that hole. The longest hole is the par-5 no.3 while the shortest is the par-3 no.4.

The club hosted the first-ever leg of the Pearl of Africa Golf series which was won by Marvin Max Kibirige, for the professionals, and John Musimenta in the amateurs.

# Entebbe

## Golf Club

### Avoid Entebbe's pine trees at all costs

When playing the par-71 Entebbe golf club, hit the ball wherever you want. But do not go to the pine trees. It may not be a pleasant round if you visit them often. Entebbe Club has the second biggest golf membership in the country. It is also a club famed for a boisterous 19th hole that makes it a favourite for many golfers who love a party. The hardest hole at the club which is a stone-throw away from the country's only international airport is hole 4, which is a par 4. Some purists, however, argue that the Deo Akope par-4 is the toughest hole to negotiate. Regardless, Entebbe is located right next to the zoo and during a round you will be met with the sound of wild animals in your proximity. You, however, shouldn't worry. The animals are all caged. And the course has a fence around it. The second Pearl of Africa leg will be held there on April 2-5.



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# Lugazi

## Golf Hills & Country Club

Located 46km from Kampala, Lugazi Golf Hills & Country Club has been transformed by the Mehta family who own it into a magnificent 18-hole course that will test any golfer to the limit. If you are not fit, Lugazi is not meant for you. It is a course awash with steep inclines and downhill walks, bent-grass greens and a picturesque radiance that make it stand out. For now, the biggest challenge with playing Lugazi is the traffic to get you to the course. But reports indicate that work will be starting soon on the Kampala-Jinja Expressway that should make access to Lugazi Hills Golf & Country club easier. The club's stroke index 1 is the par-5 no.10 which is a dog-leg left with a number of challenges to get to the green. Holes 14 and 15 are brand new holes which are also tricky, especially 14 whose walk from green to tea is a long, steep incline. POA will go to Lugazi in July.



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## There is a gap to fill in the region, and POA can do it

Long before the Pearl of Africa series in Entebbe teed off, one of the region's best professional golfers sent in an inquiry asking whether he was eligible to register and compete.

He wasn't eligible, but it was reassuring to know that golfers generally maintain tabs on what is happening around them in the region.

The challenges of Ugandan professionals and the elite Ugandan amateurs are not only a Ugandan problem; they are a regional challenge.

Even Kenya, which has a very impressive amateur calendar, is struggling with satisfying the demands of its professional golfers.

Last year the Safari Tour did not happen and as a result, there was lack of clarity on how non-Kenyan professionals would attain the qualification mark for the DP World Magical Kenya Open at the par-71 Muthaiga Golf Club.

Last month the Sunshine Development Tour came on board to help grow the professional calendar in the region. And long may it continue.

However, the Pearl of Africa series have the potential of growing into a must-play event for all professionals in the East and Central African region.

The enthusiasm is there and the interest is a no-brainer. Golf professionals will always be happy to spend when the incentive is right and for POA, the challenge is to generate the kitty that can entice golfers to fly in from countries like Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Namibia and Nigeria to compete.

A bigger POA entry naturally translates into a better tournament. And because POA is a competition started in Uganda to grow our elite game in and out of the borders, higher international entries would give it a significant profile.

POA's advent could be what the doctor ordered.

The challenge is to make it more lucrative for golfers from elsewhere, and it is one that the POA organisers are willing to address.

Irene Nakalembe





**Andrew Kabuura. SeraYaweh. Brian Tuka**  
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