

UCF ROLLS OUT ABUNDANT CHESS TALENT

FABULOUS YEAR

PHOTO BY SILVANO KIBUUKA



Uganda Chess Open champions Gareyev Timur (left) and Juliet Asaba showing off with their accolades recently

By Silvano Kibuuka

Uganda Chess Federation (UCF) continued its upward trajectory in 2025, posting commendable progress on the international scene—particularly in the juniors' category—while also strengthening governance through a smooth democratic transition and a well-run national league.

With an emphasis on nurturing talent from an early age, UCF has remained deliberate in developing young players despite several challenges faced during the year.

The 2025 season was marked by strong school participation, starting with the annual National Schools Chess Championships hosted at Our Lady of Africa-Namiryango in May.

Uganda's juniors excelled at the 2025 African Schools Chess Championship held in January in Mombasa, finishing second overall behind hosts Kenya. Team Uganda put up an impressive show, winning six medals—one

YEAR ENDER CHESS

gold, two silver and three bronze—while Kenya topped the rankings with 22 medals.

The standout performer was 15-year-old Juliet Asaba of KTLC Club in Kamwokya, who delivered Uganda's only gold medal after registering eight wins in nine rounds. Asaba also went on to win the women's title at the Uganda Open, confirming her status as one of the year's brightest talents.

Other medal-winning juniors included Ronald Wabwire, Daniel Odokinyero, Alvin Muhiirwa and Anil Suhana.

Despite their strong form, Uganda's junior players were unable to participate in the World Schools Chess Championships in Washington,

USA, scheduled for August 2–8.

The players, who had qualified earlier, failed to secure visas, costing three schools the chance to gain invaluable exposure and further elevate Uganda's presence on the global chess stage.

Uganda also began strongly at the 2025 Africa Junior Championships in Zimbabwe, further demonstrating the country's growing influence in youth chess.

TALENT

The 2025 Uganda Open Chess Championship attracted top international and local competitors.

Grandmaster Timur Gareyev emerged champion with 7.5 points in eight rounds, while International Master Elijah Emojong settled for silver.

The 15-year-old rising star, Juliet Asaba clinched the women's title. The tournament doubled as the first Grand Prix event for the 2026 Olympiad qualifiers.

Other notable winners included were FM Edwin Pido

(U2000 category) and WFM Sana Omprakash Kayyar—Africa Amateurs category

The 2025 Uganda Chess League ran smoothly from July 13 to its climax on November 30, with Kireka Chess Club reaffirming its supremacy by winning an eighth consecutive title.

The club swept all formats—Classical, Rapid and Blitz—thanks to its three-team structure.

In the Classical format, Kireka A topped the 57-team field with 33 points, followed by CNA Chess Club (31) and Kireka Panthers (26). Kireka Salty finished fourth with 25 points.

In the Blitz format, Kireka A won with 31 points, ahead of Gambit and CNA, who tied on 30 points but were placed second and third respectively. In the rapid category, their third structure, Kireka Panthers took top honors with 33 points, with Kireka A finishing second on 31.

Kireka A also received shiom from the Premier Bet kitty, earmarked for purchasing land to house the club.