

# Education VS Athletics; It's a tough call to make

PHOTO BY OLIVIA NAKATE

By Olivia Nakate

Meghan (not her real name) is currently one of the most successful junior athletes in the country.

Her performances on the track have placed her among the brightest prospects in Ugandan athletics, drawing attention from coaches, fans, and officials alike.

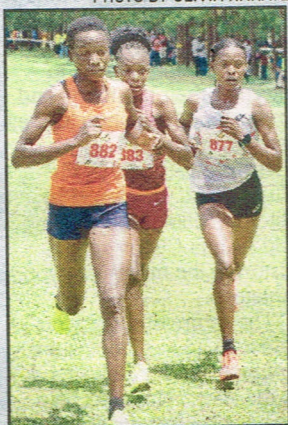
Yet behind the medals and promising future lies a troubling reality; Meghan is a Primary Seven dropout.

Despite her success, Meghan never had the opportunity to continue with her education.

When she was encouraged to return to school, at least up to tertiary level, her response was hesitant and largely negative, shaped by the belief that athletics alone can secure her future.

Meghan's story is not unique. Another junior athlete, referred to here as John (not his real name), followed a similar path. He dropped out of school to fully pursue athletics and, just like Meghan, he had no intention of returning to the classroom. For him, education looks unnecessary as long as running brings immediate rewards.

These two cases represent a growing concern within Ugandan athletics— young athletes foregoing education in pursuit of quick success on the track. While this trend threatens the long-term futures of the athletes themselves, it also poses a risk to the image of the federation.



Athletes compete recently



## Too much cash

Uganda Athletics (UA) vice president in charge of technical matters, Benjamin Njia, acknowledges the seriousness of the issue but attributes the problem to the hefty cash rewards in athletics, especially after watching stars such as Jacob Kiplimo and Joshua Cheptegei become millionaires.

"We always tell them that not all of them can achieve what these two have achieved through athletics," Njia said. "Some can achieve success through education. Having a dual career is what we are advocating for now. There is life after sports."

To address the problem, Uganda Athletics has partnered with schools in Kween, Bukwo, and Kapchorwa. Through these partnerships, the federation runs training camps within both primary and secondary schools to ensure young athletes remain in the education system while developing their talent.

Njia further explained that the federation is actively promoting athletics within schools nationwide.

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