



Bakiza (C) flanked by champions Omprakash (L) and Baguma

By Silvano Kibuuka

WIM Sana Omprakash continued her impressive rise in Ugandan chess by winning the National Junior Chess Championship on Monday at Kireka Sports View Hotel. The 16-year-old, who successfully defended her continental junior title in Zimbabwe last November, claimed her third consecutive national junior crown after scoring 7.5 points out of a possible 8 in the four-day Swiss-format tournament that opened the Uganda Chess Federation (UCF) 2026 calendar.

Competing in the Under-18 category, Omprakash was held to a single draw by Juliet Asaba of KTLCA-Kamwokya.

"I did not face much challenge in the tournament, although the competition was tough with strong players. I still have my dream of becoming a Woman Grandmaster in the next two years. I am pursuing it with caution as I balance sports with my studies," Omprakash said, while crediting her parents for their continued support.

Her victory earns her qualification for the women's Super-12 tournament – a

national qualifier for the Chess Olympiad set to begin next month.

Omprakash walked away with a gold medal, a trophy, a shopping voucher worth sh70,000, and a chess board. In the boys' section, Innocent Baguma clinched the overall title for the first time. The Primary Seven pupil at KCCA Primary School in Kamwokya won seven games and drew one in the Under-16 category.

"This is my first major win in three years of playing chess. I last won the SOM Club event in 2023. I took time to concentrate, and I thank my coaches. Chess

has earned many of us scholarships at KTLCA Chess Academy, a ghetto-based organization," said Baguma.

Newly elected UCF president Andrew Bakiza praised parents, coaches, and sponsors for supporting what he described as a landmark event.

"It was a record turnout of 308 participants – 186 in the Open category and 122 girls, across seven age groups from 8 to 20 years. I thank all stakeholders as we work to address past administrative inconsistencies now that a functional secretariat is in place," Bakiza said.

# Omprakash extends junior reign as UCF calendar opens