

Kitende have eyes on Shs1bn, African glory

BY GEORGE KATONGOLE

ROAD TO THE FINAL

Zimbabwe **1-1** Kitende

Kitende **6-0** DR Congo

Morocco **0-3** Kitende

Semis: Kitende **0-0** Benin (Pens. 4-3)

Note: Kitende is representing Uganda.

KAMPALA. St Mary's Kitende will be chasing both continental glory and a lucrative Shs1bn windfall when they take to the pitch in the final of the Caf African Schools Football Championship after edging Benin 4-3 on penalties in Thursday's semifinal in Norton, Zimbabwe.

The Ugandan representatives held their nerve after a tense goalless draw in regulation time at Ngoni Stadium, with Benin missing two spot kicks to hand Kitende a deserved place in Friday's final, where they will face either Senegal or Morocco.

This marks a significant improvement for the Wakiso-based school, who were eliminated at the semifinal stage last year.

In a tightly contested semifinal, both sides created opportunities but failed to break the dead-

HOW LUCRATIVE IS IT?

Money In The Bank. Victory today would earn Kitende a lucrative \$300,000 (about Shs1.1bn) prize, while the runners-up will take home \$200,000.

Starting XI: Imran Ssebbale (GK); Eze Kombi, Elisa Mukasa, Shafiq Kitimbo, Hamza Kisakye; Livingstone Kulata, Bashir Edema, Musa Kironde, Lucky Wanyama; Nabiru Kajumba & Owen Mukisa.

lock. Benin, who had earlier knocked out double defending champions Tanzania, proved resilient against a free-scoring Kitende side that had netted 10 goals in the group stage.

Shootout drama

Head coach Hassan Zungu made a bold tactical call ahead of the shootout, introducing goalkeeper Hamidu Kasumba for Imran Ssebbale, a move that ultimately paid off.

Bashir Edema calmly converted Uganda's open-



Flying The Flag. St Mary's Secondary School, Kitende players during training in Zimbabwe. The U-15 side has reached the African final for the first time. PHOTO/USSSA

ing penalty before Eze Kombi's powerful effort squeezed past the Benin goalkeeper despite getting a hand to it. Substitute Frank Musisi maintained composure from the spot, while Benin faltered with a second miss.

Although Elisa Mukasa struck the woodwork to briefly swing momentum, Akram Ssenyonga stepped up to convert the decisive kick and send Kitende into the final.

Dominant run

Kitende's journey to the final has been marked by attacking flair and defensive discipline. The Ugandan champions finished the group stage as the top scorers with 10 goals. Owen Mukisa leads the scoring charts with four goals, while Lucky Wanyama has added two.

Kitende qualified for the continental showpiece after winning the national title in Tororo, overcoming Amus College on penalties, before advancing through the Cecafo qualifiers where they edged Ethiopia 3-1 in another shootout.

This is their fourth consecutive appearance at the continental finals, although this time they arrive without the Cecafo crown, currently held by regional rivals Tanzania.

The tournament, now in its fourth edition, has been dominated by West and East African schools, with Mali's CS Ben Sekou Sylla winning the inaugural title and Tanzania's Golden Gate lifting the trophy twice.