

PHOTOS BY NICHOLAS ONEAL

Wandera (left) chats with Mulinge at the Absa Kampala Hash House Harriers (KH3) Seven Hills run the Millennium grounds in Lugogo



Great Lakes's Wekesa (right) arrives for the run



Dax Vibe entertaining runners at the Absa Kampala Hash House Harriers (KH3) Seven Hills run the Millennium grounds in Lugogo on Sunday

By Alex Balimwikungu

Kampala turned red and sweaty on Sunday morning as more than 8,000 runners, fitness fanatics, corporate teams, families and running clubs stormed the streets for the 2026 Absa KH3-7 Hills Run.

From nervous first-timers chasing bragging rights to hardened road warriors, participants took on the 5km, 10km and brutal signature 25km routes, conquering the lung-busting climbs and sharp descents of Kampala's famous seven hills.

The race was flagged off by MTN Uganda chief executive officer Sylvia Mulinge alongside Absa Bank's managing director David Wandera and Alice Gita Okecho the Hash Master of the Kampala Hash House Harriers.

This year's cause struck a powerful chord; *Helping More Girls Stay In School*. Every stride, every hill and every sweaty finish-line hug contributed to initiatives supporting

girls' education. "What we witnessed today is a powerful demonstration of what becomes possible when communities, corporates, families and sports enthusiasts come together behind a shared cause," Wandera said. But if there was one thing runners feared and loved in equal measure, it was the infamous 25km Seven Hills Challenge.

The route served up punishing climbs that humbled even the most confident athletes. To make the suffering sweeter, runners earned a commemorative wristband for every hill conquered. When the dust finally settled, Peter Akwech stormed across the finish line in 1:21:40 to emerge king of the hills, while Sylvia Chelangat powered to victory in the

women's category with a time of 1:46:55.

The overall 25km winner pocketed sh10m, while the top male and female finishers each walked away with land titles courtesy of Bakayima Properties. But perhaps the most coveted reward was a ticket beyond Uganda's borders. The top two male and female finishers earned slots to

KAMPALA TURNS RED FOR ABSA RUN

compete in the 2026 Absa Black Star Marathon in Accra, Ghana

"One of the things that makes the Absa KH3-7 Hills Run unique is that we are not only rewarding performance with prizes, but also with experiences," Helen Basuuta Nangonzi, the marketing director at Absa Bank Uganda, said.

For Akwech, the victory was about more than money and medals. "The seven hills course is never easy. It pushes you physically and mentally, but the atmosphere today was incredible," he said.

Beyond the elite competition, the run showcased Uganda's booming running culture, with organised clubs, office squads, parents and children all turning up in large numbers. Kids enjoyed dedicated family-friendly activities.

And when the running shoes finally came off, the party started. The day climaxed with explosive performances from Kapeke, Azawi, Winnie Nwagi, King Saha and Dax Vibe. The run, which was rescheduled from last month, was worth the wait.