

Bukedea comprehensively lose USSSA final to neighbours Amus

No Secret. The champions built their campaign on defensive solidity rather than attacking flair. In the entire tournament, Amus only scored more than one goal once, in a 4-1 victory.

BY GEORGE KATONGOLE

Amus College finally crowned their rise in school football by winning their maiden USSSA Boys Football Championship title after edging district rivals Bukedea Comprehensive 1-0 in Tuesday's final at Lira Town College grounds.

A brilliantly struck first-half free kick from John Brian Otim settled a tense and tactical contest to hand Amus the biggest prize in school football. In the build-up to the all-Bukedea District final, Amus head of technical Nimrod Kintu had confidently described Bukedea as "our juniors." While the difference between the two sides was not overwhelming on the pitch, Amus still completed a clean sweep over their neighbours for the third time this year.

Otim delivers

Bukedea looked more aggressive in the opening stages, but Ryan Giggs Osinya could only find the side netting with their best early opportunity.

Despite the huge crowd that filled the Lira Town College grounds, the atmosphere remained unusually subdued, with conversations among fans easily audible throughout the contest. Once Otim curled home the decisive free kick in the first half, the match in-



creasingly became an exercise in game management for Amus. The victory also confirmed coach Richard Malinga's growing reputation in schools football. Having guided Buddo to the title last year, Malinga became one of the few coaches to win the championship in back-to-back seasons with different schools.

Defensive resilience

The champions built their campaign on defensive solidity rather than attacking flair. In the entire tournament, Amus only scored more than one goal once, during a 4-1 victory over Mukono Kings, in the group stages.

They also survived tense penalty shootouts against Jinja Progressive and St Mary's Kitende in the knockout rounds before lifting the trophy. Although Bukedea enjoyed long spells of possession in the second half and pushed ag-

gressively for an equaliser, Amus defended resolutely. Forward Mudhasir Ijosiga, one of the team's main attacking outlets, spent much of the closing stages helping defensively as Bukedea camped in their half.

The freedom and confidence with which Bukedea attacked earned applause from sections of the crowd, but they lacked the finishing touch to force extra time.

Ssali left frustrated

Bukedea coach Ronald Ssali cut a frustrated figure afterwards and insisted his side had been the better team despite defeat.

"Football is won in moments and they have won this title with just one shot on goal," Ssali said. "We dominated them in every aspect but maybe they were lucky." The result was nevertheless Bukedea's best performance.

USSSA CHAMPS

Final

Amus 1
Bukedea 0

Third place

St Mary's
Kitende 3
Kyaddondo 0

Tikole demands more despite winning start in India