



L I F E MAKES DIFFERENT U-TURNS.!

*From the village, to the orphanage,
with big dreams.*

Born into poverty and without the opportunity to develop football skills at a young age, Nkabirwa Joseph believes he missed out on the chance to become a professional footballer. Now he is using his own love for the game to help provide others with the opportunities he didn't have.

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As I was growing up, there was nobody in our community to teach me and the other kids football skills. I had the desire and longing to play the game of football, but I didn't have a coach to work with me. It meant I often found myself kicking anything that looked kickable like plastic bottles of water or locally made balls of banana fable. My parents were very poor, and they could not afford paying fees for me to join a school or football academy. It meant I missed out on learning basic football skills at an early age and I eventually started school at 9 years.

My name is Nkabirwa Joseph, I was born to the late Posiano Namunna and Nayiga Josephine, who lived in Uganda in a small village in Masaka called Buwendda. My parents gave birth to 12 children and I was the twelfth. Tragically, six of these died shortly after birth, because they were infected by boils and different disease and my parents had no access to proper medication. I consider myself a miracle from God because I also suffered from a serious boil on my head in front of my left ear. This puss-filled boil was so dangerous because it used to attract maggots and flies, due the way it was smelling. My parents thought I was not going to live, like the others who had died to similar conditions and my boil was on the head which was more dangerous. They used local herbs to treat it, and even though it took a long time, it healed and I survived.

Soon after I got miraculously healed, my family faced adversity as heavy rain and a storm in our small village destroyed our mud bricks house . Due to poverty and the spread of disease, my parents decided to look for greener pastures somewhere new. They took a local boat through the swamps of Masaka since it was the easiest means to the other side of the village. It was here they had the road to connect to the desired destination.



Here I am with my friends and a few relatives



My first ever photo



Posing on my "new" bike



"I kicked anything that looked kickable"

The only way to the outside of the small village to the nearby road

They travelled about 120 km and eventually landed in the Entebbe, in a village called Nkumba. Since they were new to the area, the only work they could do to get food for us to eat was to work as laborers in fields. Payment was food to take back home so that my elder brother, my sister and myself, had food to eat for that day. For two years, my parents could not find jobs.



My father was a builder, but being in a new place meant nobody would trust him to build a house. We were always hungry, and our diet consisted mainly of wild fruits from the bushes: mangos, jackfruit, berries, and root crops like raw cassava roots. This was lunch and supper, because there was no money for food, not even for sauce.

Access to education

Getting a chance to go to school was unthought of and I spent most of my early childhood without going to school. When my father died in 2000, I was left hopeless. I remember thinking to myself, if we were struggling with life and poverty when he was alive, what now that he is gone. My mother had no job but continued working in the fields to earn food for each day.

After my father had passed away, someone connected us to an orphanage in Luweero district, now known as Nakaseke district. A small light of hope and a smile came to my face on hearing from my mother that we were going to the orphanage where I was going to start school.

At the orphanage, I started going to school but I was not like any other child because I started at the age of 9 years in grade primary one. Since I was in school for the first time, things were challenging for me. I clearly remember holding a pen and was shaking so bad, but, with time, I started catching up slowly but surely.



My first day in school



Playing the modern ball at the orphanage for the first time ever

It's at the orphanage that I started playing football and where I got a strong desire and dream to play in the big clubs in Europe. It was the first time I had played with a real football.

I started playing football from my primary school when I was in grade three. I am the boy wearing a purple jacket in the photo taking on my man

With my brother (on the right) wearing a real football shirt



Wearing the football jersey for the first time was just amazing. It was so rare to have a football jersey, so we felt so good we couldn't avoid the smile

We did not care if we had shoes or not, we just enjoyed playing football. When I was in grade seven - which was seven years after the death of my father - my mother passed on too. It was a very difficult time. I remember when she passed on, I was finishing my final national examination.

My primary final national examination



Playing football in my primary school in grade 3



When the news reached me, I did not believe it because in my mind I couldn't imagine her dying that early. It was not easy to take it in. I felt so alone, even though there were people at the orphanage who tried to comfort me. After going through all of these life breaking moments, I had to live with the reality of my mother's death and life had made yet another U-turn that I had no control over. I believe that with certain aspects in life, it's only God who gives and takes away.

Winning trophies and developing an understanding of the game

I went on to pass my national examinations and also played at the district levels for the primary schools, where, together with my friends, I won the inter-district trophy for Nakaseke district.

By this time, we were just kicking the ball with little knowledge of the game. However, this gradually changed thanks to people that worked with us and especially the man squatting in the picture: one of our coaches. With his guidance, we were able to win the primary district level trophy for Nakaseke.

After primary school, I started secondary school in the same orphanage. I continued to play football but, again, without proper coaching. When I finished my O- level exams at the school, the orphanage supported me to study for a certificate in business administration. After these studies, I was on my own and ready to start a new life. I wanted to continue studying, but the orphanage could no longer support me, so I had to find a way to support myself. I started to play football for a local club called “Massavu” (which means “farts” in English).



*My teammates and our two coaches with the trophy.
I am third from your left holding the trophy*



The club supported me to pay for my college fees which allowed me to study for a diploma in business administration and human resource management. During my studies, I had to ride a bicycle about 20 km through the busy streets of Kampala every day to and from the college. On top of that, in the mornings

I had to first go to train at the local club and after lunch head for the college. This went on for two and half years. Some days, I was involved in accidents as the streets were always chaos with cars not caring about the bicycles, but thank God I survived.

Training at the local club (Massavu)

There was another U-turn in my life after finishing college. I was determined to reach my dream of playing for a top club in Europe, but this was denied by the poverty and corruption in Uganda. I trained hard and was invited for trials with two clubs in top Ugandan football. Sadly, I was not given the chance to join them because I was not able to pay for them to take me in. Even though I played and scored in the last two trial matches with two different clubs I was not chosen. I was left hopeless and wondering what I needed to do so they would take me in.

Shattered dreams and starting my coaching journey

My dreams were shattered after the disappointment and I hated the game of football because of the way I was treated. At that moment, I did not want to hear anything about football in Uganda because I knew that I was good but nobody would give me a chance because I couldn't pay them the money that they were asking for. Given the poor family that I came from and the poverty in Uganda, it was extremely hard for me to fulfill my dreams of playing football in Europe.



Getting ready for training at the trials



Celebrating with my friends after scoring 2-3 minutes after the start of the final qualification match

When I realised that my dream was fading, I decided to take a break from football for a short time. Nevertheless, since football was my passion, I studied to become a coach on the first coaching course in Ugandan football. After I completed the course and attained my coaching licence, I made a U-turn to return to football with a village team called Luweero United. When I joined, the team had been in the third division for 33 years, but had ambitions to get to the second highest league in Ugandan football called the Big league. After playing for them for four seasons, we made it to a qualification match, in Njeru technical Centre, to be promoted to the second division.

We went on to win this important game which meant that I was able to help my local team to go to the second top league in Ugandan football after playing in the third division for 37 years.

For a long time, I have had the desire to help the young generation to achieve their dreams, especially because of all the challenges I have gone through due to sickness, poverty and corruption.

One year after completing the my first coaching course, I continued to study for a diploma known as CAF D which I passed successfully. I also completed my fitness UEFA Diploma level one coaching course. This knowledge is important to help me to teach the kids proper movement skills and to keep them healthy and develop their fitness

A lack of proper development skills and knowledge of the game of football prevented me to be as successful as I had dreamed. U- Turns, means decisions and events that happened, changed my fortune. If it was not for poverty and a lack of proper training in the early stages of life my dreams may have come true..

"I was able to help my local team to go to the second top league in Ugandan football after playing in the third division for 37 years"

Helping kids to make their dream come true

U-TURNS SPORTS & MUSIC ACADEMY is here to help young kids learn the basic, fundamental skills that will help give them the chance of a better life and for some of them, even an opportunity to compete and play on an international stage in the world of sports and music. In the villages of Uganda, the little kids are rarely being educated to do things the right way. Most of the time they learn individual skills needed to play sport on their own. The result is that this inhibits their development and true potential which makes it difficult for them to excel in life and almost impossible for them to compete in sports and other activities at a high level.

I believe that one person has the potential to change a whole community if they are taught the

right way and given the opportunity to develop both as a person and a football player or artist. Why not give an opportunity to these kids from poverty ridden Uganda and Africa at large to excel in life, you never know, they could become like Sadio Mane or Mo Salahof.

As I conclude my story, I would like to invite you to join us to help support the next generation of boys and girls in the world of music and sports at large.

I thank you from the bottom of my heart and want you to know that the decision (U-turn) you have the opportunity of making today, has the potential to change the lives of many girls and boys in the poverty stricken villages of Uganda, through raising their basic and fundamental skill levels.



With my friends and colleagues, at the closing ceremony of the FUSA-UEFA fitness coach diploma course in 2022

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The day I met coach Paul, my new friend Sweden



Here I am receiving my FUFA-UEFA Fitness Coach diploma