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Project Success

Kato Ssebbaale juggles sports with medicine

Dr Kato Ssebbaale

BUSY SCHEDULE: Dr Kato Ssebbaale finds time for sport despite his busy schedule as chief executive officer of Case Medical Centre. He wants students to get practical education.

By Isaac Khisa ([email the author](#))

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In Part XXI of Project Success, we track down Dr Kato Ssebbaale, who emerged Uganda's second best O'level student in 1980. He tells his story to **Isaac Khisa**.

Dr Kato Ssebbaale's office at Case Medical Centre on Buganda Road is unique for the number of messages pinned on notice boards. Promoting health, preventing illness, restoring health and alleviating suffering have been named as the four principles of health and pinned at a strategic notice board that is impossible to miss.

Dr Ssebbaale, who is a consultant physician, laparoscopic surgeon and gastroenterologist, is widely known as the chairman of the Uganda Cricket Association. Born into a polygamous family of 20 at Gayaza village in Masaka district in 1965, he attended Matala Boarding Primary School and Kings College Budo for his entire secondary education. He was among the top three students in the country at both Ordinary and Advanced level. After scoring BBBC in Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Mathematics at A' Level, he joined Makerere University in 1983 to pursue a Bachelor of Medicine degree.

During his studies, his mother was working at Mulago Referral Hospital as nurse whereas his late father was a businessman and commercial farmer. He rejoined Makerere University for a Masters degree in 1995 before proceeding to Britain for further studies in 1998.

Committed sportsman

He dismisses the argument that it is impossible to excel in sports and academics at the same time as hearsay. “I can’t say that I was too much in sports but for one to balance the two, a student simply needs to be responsible the way I was,” Dr Sebbaale says.

“I was a captain in a cricket team from S4 to S6 but that did not deter me from passing my examinations.” He also captained his house while at Kings College Buddo for two years, captained Makerere University Cricket team for two years and played cricket for Uganda as an international player in 1983.

“I am a fellow of the College of Surgeons in Eastern and Central Africa, a fellow to International College of Surgeons, and a member of the World Laparoscopic Surgeons,” he says of his professional career achievements. “I am also proud to be a fellow of the African Leadership Initiative and Aspen Global Network of Leadership.”

The graduate of Uganda Management Institute, which he says enabled him acquire skills in leadership, has besides served as a lecturer in surgery at Makerere. In spite of all his efforts, Dr Sebbaale says he was always inspired by his classmates and the lecturers who treated him as a friend and son.


Positive influences

“While at Makerere, Prof Chris Ssali, who was a surgeon, had a clear mind; he seemed to know everything on this earth in his area of specialisation and I really admire him,” he says. He also credits Prof John Ronnie who took him like his son while he was pursuing further studies in the United Kingdom. He blamed the current education system for producing students who cannot analyse world problems. “Students these days are simply being taught how to pass examinations,” he says.

“We also passed yes, but it is not the way it is done today. When you compare students of our time and those of today, those of our times seemed to be brighter yet they did not perform the way today’s students perform.” He says students need to be taught how to deal with the real world problems and not simply passing examinations through cramming.

The chief executive officer of Case Medical Centre says his busy schedule does not stop him from partaking in sports. “I play cricket, golf and swim, and jog at least 10 kilometers twice a week. I also push all my children to be active sportsmen and women,” says Mr Sebbaale. “Most of us work on incidentals but if anyone wakes up with clear programmes, then he or she cannot fail to perform all the duties.”

Case Medical Centre is housed in a six storey building and employs over 100 people. The clinic operates 24/7 with all the departments operational. Dr Sebbaale says he wants to retire an early age so as to enjoy his old age.

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