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## Sub-Saharan Africa

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# The Best of Enemies

By Andrew Rice

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**KAMPALA, Uganda**—Nelson Mandela National Stadium, on Kampala's eastern outskirts, has always been something of a white elephant: One of those huge edifice complexes upon which African governments like to squander money. Despite its august name, Ugandans always refer to the stadium as Namboole, after the neighborhood in which it is located. It was completed in 1994, at a cost of \$31 million—the same amount the country's spending on a five-year project to make its water and sanitation safe.

Namboole holds 42,000 people. Once, I'm told, it sold out for a performance by a South African reggae star. However, most of the time, it stands cavernously empty, a monument to senseless profligacy.

My porch looks out on Namboole, and I've often mused over its incongruity. A massive concrete donut, situated in a valley at the edge of the undeveloped countryside, it resembles a Candlestick Park amidst the verdant hills. In the evening, when the poor are cooking their dinner over outdoor fires and the valley is wreathed in gray smoke, the arena shimmers in the waning light like a mirage.

How strange then was it to see, on June 7, Namboole packed to the rafters, filled with whooping red-and-yellow clad Ugandan soccer fans. It was an unprecedented crowd: more than 45,000 people, far more than the stadium's official capacity. They were there to watch their team take on archrival Rwanda. The spectators sat in the aisles and stood on the landings, teetering on tiptoes to catch a glimpse of the field. Outside the gates, crowds of disconsolate young Ugandan men lingered, hoping, I suppose, that the box office would relent and go for a few thousand more.

This was a big match. The team that won would be well-positioned to qualify for the Africa Cup of Nations, the continental championship that will take place in Tunisia next year. But more was at stake at Namboole than mere sporting supremacy. The soccer showdown came at a time when the two nations the teams represented, once close allies, seemed poised to go to war. Relations between Uganda and Rwanda had been testy since both countries invaded the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1998, helping to set off that country's brutal civil war. The tension broke into open warfare in 1999, when the Rwandan army handed the Ugandans a battlefield defeat in Kisangani, an eastern Congolese city both sides were keen to loot.

Sportswriters everywhere are partial to martial metaphors. If war is politics by other means, then international soccer, the wags say, is war in Umbros and cleats. (England beat Germany in the 1966 World Cup final, and at matches between the two teams to this day, loutish Brits sing, to the tune of "Camptown Races": "TWO WORLD WARS AND ONE WORLD CUP, DOO-DA, DOO-DA.")

In this case, though, all those stale combat clichés fit. As the day of the match drew near, the talk in the Kampala's bars and on the radio had been of dual revenge: for the scoreless draw Rwanda had inflicted on Uganda in Kigali in March, and for the military humiliation in Kisangani.

"The popular thinking," wrote Peter Mweise, a columnist for *The Monitor*, a



*Some 45,000 fans—far more than the national stadium’s official capacity—came to watch Uganda play Rwanda. There was an undercurrent of international tension to the match, but no one could have predicted what a battle it would become. (Photo courtesy of The Monitor)*

Ugandan daily newspaper, “appears to be that if we cannot handle the Rwandans on the battlefield, let us teach them a lesson on the soccer field.”

Little did anyone anticipate that, before the match was even half over, the soccer field would actually become a battlefield. Afterward, everyone agreed it was one of the strangest soccer spectacles in Uganda’s history: A match featuring a flamboyant goalie, a combative midfielder, allegations of witchcraft, two bench-clearing brawls, cameo appearances on the field by several truncheon-wielding police officers, a near-forfeit, and a single goal, scored by a player whose gashed head was wrapped in a bandage.

“The Gods Must Be Crazy,” screamed the headline atop the following Monday’s sports section of *The Monitor*. *The New Vision*, the other paper in town, put the prevailing sentiment more succinctly:

“Ugly & Nasty.”

\* \* \*

Perhaps it was an omen of messy things to come that the match was nearly an hour late in starting. Later we learned the reason: The Rwandan team’s bus was caught in a miles-long traffic jam along the single paved approach road to the stadium.

No one was terribly perturbed. This is one of the charming things about African soccer and one of the reasons I so enjoy following the Ugandan national team, which is nicknamed the Cranes. So often here, the

highfalutin’ aspirations of sport are overtaken by the travails of everyday life. *Of course* the bus is delayed, 45,000 people thought. Jinja Road is a nightmare.

As with so much else in Uganda, it’s not surprising that the games start late. All things considered, it’s amazing that games are ever played at all. The national soccer federation, FUFA, is Uganda’s government in microcosm. Which is to say it is corrupt, incompetent and unabashed. Earlier this year, a government investigation found FUFA’s president and other top officials had managed to skim a staggering 330 million shillings (roughly \$165,000) from the federation’s budget, sometimes filing false receipts to cover their tracks. FUFA officials brushed off the accusations, questioning the government’s authority to investigate them. “We are not accountable to the public,” said an indignant federation spokesman.

Rampant thieving leaves the team perennially impoverished. Uganda has produced a few relatively talented players in recent years, but anyone good enough leaves the country to play overseas. (One, Suleiman Tenywa, plays for the Dallas Burn of U.S. Major League Soccer.) For every big match, FUFA must desperately scrape together cash to fly its best players back home. When the national team seemed likely to run out of money earlier this year, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni himself was forced to intervene, giving FUFA 125 million shillings (about \$63,000) to pay for such essentials as hotel rooms, gas and players’ salaries.

Poverty isn’t the Cranes’ only problem. Something more nebulous is at work, a kind of spiritual disorgani-

zation. This is evident on the field, where the Cranes' style of play might charitably be described as ragged, and off it, too. Traveling to play its crucial March match against Rwanda in Kigali, the team somehow managed to miss its flight. The players arrived late and exhausted after a long detour through Bujumbura, the oft-shelled capital of Burundi.

The players are poorly paid, and act that way. The Cranes' best striker, Hassan Mubiru, is a moody prima donna. He frequently fails to show up for practice. On one occasion, he offered the explanation that since he was fasting for Ramadan, he simply didn't have the energy to run around. Andrew "Fimbo" Mukasa, the all-time leading scorer in the local professional league, is unofficially banned from the national squad because of his erratic behavior. He was recently arrested for beating up his own mother, and subsequently institutionalized. Livingstone Mbabazi, a defender who plays professionally in Ireland, was in the doghouse for a while for disappearing before a crucial 2002 match against Ghana. The local soccer authorities, who had spent \$1,300 to fly Mbabazi back for the match, demanded to know where he had been. Mbabazi claimed he had been detained at the Irish Embassy working out visa problems. The embassy denied it. No one's ever figured out what really kept Mbabazi away from the game.

On the day of this year's Rwanda match, Uganda found itself ranked 109th out of the world's 204 national soccer teams, on a par with Uzbekistan and the Faroe Islands. But through some minor miracle, the Cranes' had somehow managed to put themselves into contention for the Africa Cup of Nations. The Cup qualification works, three teams are grouped together, and

each play two matches against the other, home and home. The team with the best record in the four games wins a spot in the big tournament. In its first match, the Cranes showed a lot of pluck, and had a lot of luck, scoring a shocking 1-0 victory over Ghana, a continental powerhouse.

Rwanda, the third team in the group, was comparatively weak—ranked 121st in the world. But in Uganda's second match, played in the Rwandan capital Kigali, the Cranes showed little of the form or verve they displayed against Ghana, and stumbled to a turgid 0-0 draw.

With a win in its third match, though, against Rwanda on its own turf of Namboole, Uganda could get even with its unfriendly neighbor. And that would almost assure the Cranes of a trip to Tunisia.

From the kickoff, revenge seemed to be what the Uganda had in mind. Midfielder Abubaker Tabula attacked fluidly up the left side of the field, causing the Rwandan defense all kinds of problems. The visitors, in their white and blue uniforms, seemed hard-pressed to retain possession of the ball.

Only Mohammed Mossi, Rwanda's pint-sized goalkeeper, kept his team in the game. Mossi is a colorful character. He wore a flaming orange jersey, and hopped around like a speed freak. After saving one hard shot from Ugandan midfielder Hakim Magumba, the goalie waited a beat and then executed a perfect forward flip, à la Ozzie Smith. Even home-team fans let out an appreciative cheer.

When, however, more than 20 minutes had elapsed and the Cranes had failed to score on Mossi, Ugandan supporters began to feel restless.



*Ugandan defender Suleiman Tenywa, pictured here in the match against Rwanda in Kigali, plays professionally in the United States, for the Dallas Burn of Major League Soccer. (Photo courtesy of The Monitor)*

Tabula launched a shot that looked to be sure goal, only to see the ball carom off the post. Then, a few minutes later, a long pass found a wide-open Ugandan player near the top of the goal box. Mossi charged out and flung his body into the air, deflecting the Ugandan shot, but leaving the goal wide open. Magumba collected the ball and chipped it towards the net. But a Rwandan player, hustling back to the goal line, deflected the shot out of bounds. It appeared that the ball had crossed the line before the defender touched it, but the referee signaled: no goal.

Just a few minutes later, Tabula made another amazing

run through the Rwandan defense. But his shot hit the post again.

Now the Ugandan players were rattled. Some unseeing force seemed to be working against the Cranes, thwarting their attacks and denying them their rightful goals. The Cranes got the a feeling they knew the problem. "When things happen the way it did ... then something that isn't right is going on," Tabula later explained. "Of course I don't believe in witchcraft, but when obvious chances hit the inside of the bar ... it gets you worrying."

A minute after Tabula's second near-miss, Mossi went to the back of his net and touched something that was tied there. It looked like a small black pouch.

The real battle was about to begin.

\* \* \*

To this day, the debate goes on about what was inside that small piece of cloth. Some claimed it was a feather, or a bone, or coffee beans wrapped in a banana leaf, or an ominous black powder. One person told me the offending object was a piece of candy.

Whatever was inside it, Mossi's gesture in touching the black pouch, in full view of the home-team fans, was taken as a deliberate provocation. To understand why it was so incendiary, it's necessary to back the story up a bit, to late March and the first meeting between Uganda and Rwanda, in Kigali.

Three of us made the trip: Me, Jessie Graham, an American radio reporter who was doing a segment about the match for the National Public Radio sports show "It's Only a Game," and my Ugandan friend Allan Begira. Allan, 25, is a fun-loving guy who likes his beer and smokes close to a pack of cigarettes a day, an expensive habit that bespeaks a privileged upbringing. He is fit and muscular, with a soft, deep voice and a wide grin, and I like him, in part, because he has such an acute sense of humor about what's absurd in his own culture, and in others'.

We left on a Friday, the day before the match. As we drove through the hill country of western Uganda, dozens of busses passed us, filled with raucous Ugandan soccer fans. The border was a mess. Thousands swarmed at the usually-sleepy border post, waving red, black and



*At the border post between Uganda and Rwanda, thousands of fans waited impatiently for their passports to be stamped. The post closed at 6 p.m., leaving many fans stranded at the border overnight. They slept in their busses and drove to Kigali in the morning.*

gold flags, singing patriotic songs, and occasionally starting fistfights with the beleaguered guards. Inevitably, the newspaper headlines spoke of a Ugandan "invasion."

The metaphor had an edge to it. At the time, it seemed like war was imminent. We could feel it in the air, the way the wind rises before a rainy-season downpour: an ineffable yet still perceptible sense of the kinetic. For weeks, the newspapers had been filled with stories of movement: Troops marching through distant Congo towns; dissident colonels defecting from one side to the other like free agents in the off-season; angry words ricocheting between President Museveni and his Rwandan counterpart, Paul Kagame. Each side accused the other of arming mischief-making rebels. Uganda claimed Rwanda was behind a shadowy guerrilla force known as the People's Redemption Army, supposedly headed by Col. Kizza Besigye, the disgruntled loser to Museveni in 2001's presidential election. Rwanda accused Uganda of training an army made up of former members of the *interahamwe* militias, the perpetrators of Rwanda's horrific 1994 genocide.

Amid the tension, the match in Kigali had acquired the feeling of a proxy battle. On the radio, the head of the Rwandan football federation, a brigadier general, promised that Rwanda would vanquish its neighbor. Meanwhile, back in Uganda, a government minister disclosed that his government really *was* training a secret army to subvert the Rwandans: A force of 30 dancers, drilled in the tactics of bump-and-grind. "They will put on mini-skirts and Madonna tops so that we scare our enemies in Rwanda," the minister declared.

I had never quite understood why things soured so badly between Rwanda and Uganda. Not so long ago,

the two countries were the best of friends—so closely aligned that many considered Rwanda a satellite of its larger neighbor. “We are brothers,” one boozy Ugandan soccer fan told me of his Rwandan counterparts.

“Brothers” is a word ordinary Ugandans and Rwandans often use to describe their relationship, and in many cases, the family bond is real. My travel companion Allan, for instance, is a product of a tribally mixed marriage, which is not uncommon in Uganda. His father, a well-to-do coffee dealer, is from western Uganda and a member of the Banyankole tribe. (The same one Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni belongs to.) Allan’s mother, on the other hand, came from Rwanda when she was a girl.

Despite his mixed heritage, Allan felt no sense of divided loyalties when it came to rooting for his national team. “I am a Ugandan,” he said. But politics, is not quite so simple: He is a man caught in between.

The night before the match in Kigali, Allan and I met some Rwandan friends of his at a bar called the Executive Car Wash. Its name notwithstanding—Africans *love* to wash their cars—it was known as one of Kigali’s posh places, a “Ugandan” hangout. Which is to say it is favored by members of Rwanda’s English-speaking elite, many of whom actually grew up in Uganda.

Allan seemed to know everyone at the Car Wash. He chatted amiably with one of the bar’s owners, a former schoolmate who had become a child soldier in Kagame’s army and who, at 25, had recently retired from the Rwandan army as a captain. He introduced me to his

uncle, a financier of Kagame’s rebellion who had parlayed the new government’s gratitude into a career as a construction magnate. (The uncle graciously picked up our tab.) At one point, a tall, casually-dressed man came over to chat. After he left, Allan leaned over and whispered to me: “You have just met a brigadier.”

The story of Allan’s family is emblematic of that of a whole generation forced into exile by whims of history and ethnic politics, and the hard choices many of these exiles have had to make about where they belong—in their mother country, or their adopted one.

Allan’s Rwandan grandfather was a chief based in a prefecture not far from the Ugandan border. He was a Tutsi, a member the cattle-keeping ethnic minority that historically ruled Rwanda and its majority population of ethnic Hutus, who were farmers. Rwanda’s Belgian colonial rulers reinforced this unequal power structure, making it more rigid and authoritarian. To determine who belonged to which group, the Belgians counted people’s cows, and, following the then-voguish theories of eugenics, measured their noses and skulls.

In the 1950s, however, the traditional order crumbled. Paradoxically, it was the educated Tutsi elite that first began to agitate for independence from Belgium. The Belgians, alarmed, made an about-face and began to support Hutu “liberation.” Some Tutsis fled to Uganda and launched a guerrilla war. The new Hutu rulers’ response to rebel attacks was to massacre Tutsi chiefs and other members of the elite. Anywhere from 5,000 to 20,000 people were killed over the next few years. Allan’s grandfather was among those murdered, along with four of his sons. Allan’s grandmother gathered the rest of the family and fled to Uganda.

Tens of thousands of Rwandan refugees settled in Uganda in the late 1950s. Like many of them, Allan’s mother Theresa grew up in a refugee camp. This diaspora enthusiastically supported Museveni when he launched a war to take control of Uganda in 1981. So many Tutsi refugees served in his guerrilla army that the government at the time spoke of “Rwandan” invaders. After Museveni triumphed in 1986, the Rwandans prospered. They took up important positions in government. They raised their children speaking English, and they became Ugandan in nearly every sense.

Theresa attended Makerere University in Kampala, where she met a nice Ugandan, Allan’s father. She had three children with him. She raised her



family in Kampala, speaking English and Luganda. Allan has also learned to speak Kinyarwanda, the Rwandan language, so that he can communicate with his grandmother, a lovely, cheerful woman now in her 90s, who still wears the colorful wrap garments of her native country, and until very recently drank bootleg *waragi* (banana gin) every day. She had it brought in from the countryside in large plastic jerrycans. But the rest of his siblings have never seen any point in learning their mother's mother tongue. Theresa herself has only been back to her home country once, for a wedding.

Some of Theresa's relatives, on the other hand, are now among Rwanda's most powerful people. One, a general, now lives in a mansion decorated with gold fixtures stripped from one of Congolese dictator Mobutu Sese Seko's old palaces. He was among a group of Tutsi officers in the Ugandan army who in 1990 deserted, crossed the border, and launched a civil war in Rwanda, which eventually brought the present government to power. Another of Allan's many uncles, this one famous for his bravery—he was once badly mauled fighting off a leopard with his bare hands, and more recently suffered terrible burns while fighting for Rwanda in the Congo—stayed at the family house in Kampala the night before the mass desertion. He said nothing of what was about to happen: Just ate a big meal, slipped away, and went to war.

Paul Kagame, who led the rebel army, was a former refugee himself. He had been a Museveni protégé, had served in his guerrilla army and later in his government, as the president's military spymaster. (Uganda's newly-appointed army chief, whose main job may be to fight Rwanda, was best man at Kagame's wedding.) Museveni

supported Kagame's rebellion with arms and money. The 1994 genocide, in which Rwanda's hardline Hutu leaders organized the killing of some 800,000 Tutsis and Hutu moderates, was really an act of desperation by a dying regime. By the end of 1994, Kagame was running Rwanda.

For a while after Kagame took power, he remained best-of-friends with Museveni. No one really understands what caused the relationship between the two presidents to break down, but many believe the conflict to be essentially Oedipal. Certainly, it is bitterly personal.

"Museveni looks at [the Rwandans], and sees it as if he's the man, he's the patron," said Philip Kasaija Apuuli, a Makerere University professor who has studied the Rwanda-Uganda conflict. "The [Rwandans] crave the respect of these people here."

Who would win a war between the two neighbors is an open question. Though Uganda is the bigger country, Rwanda is generally thought to have a better army. The only certainty is that the fight would be a disaster for both sides, since both depend heavily on donor funding, which would likely be withdrawn in the event of conflict. (It is no accident that Clare Short, then the British government's minister in charge of international aid, was the principal mediator between the two countries until her resignation earlier this year.)

If war does come, it will leave people like my friend Allan in a quandary. The fact that Museveni and Kagame have fallen out does not obliterate the ties of friendship and family that exist between the Ugandan and Rwandan elites. They remain intertwined, intermixed and intermarried. It's as if, in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Boston, the Cabots and the Lodges had armed themselves and gone to war in Rhode Island.

That night at the Car Wash, no one wanted to talk about war. The Cabots and Lodges were getting along famously. A bunch of us sat around a plastic table set up in the bar's gravel parking lot. Allan reminisced about old times with his Rwandan friends, most of whom had grown up with him in Kampala. They traded the latest gossip: Who had a new job, who was engaged, who was tempting fate by sleeping with a general's wife.

I struck up a conversation with Allan's closest Rwandan friend. He had attended Makerere University Business School with Allan. But after college, instead of staying in Kampala like Allan, he had gone to live in Kigali. His parents were Rwandan, and he said he just



*Most of Rwanda's current ruling class grew up in Uganda as refugees, and the two countries' respective elites remain closely tied. Even amid all the war talk, the posh Kampala Golf Club still held a tournament this year to mark the anniversary of the day Paul Kagame overthrew Rwanda's genocidal Hutu government.*



*Allan Begira, in the stands of Amaharo National Stadium, Kigali.*

felt he belonged back home. He had been living in Rwanda for a year.

Rwanda, Allan's friend said, was a lot different from Uganda. More closed, repressive, secretive. "I never talk about politics here with anyone I don't know," he said, because he is afraid the government might find out. (Subsequently, he asked me not to use his name in this report.) He said he loved Rwanda, but he still feels a deep connection to Uganda. His parents live there, for one thing. They won't come back because they fear another genocide, that one day the majority Hutus might rise up against the English-speaking Tutsi elite. Allan's friend worries too. He still keeps his Ugandan passport, just in case.

However, when it came to whom he would root for in the next day's match, Allan's friend was vociferously loyal to Rwanda. Later that night, the whole table shared a bottle of Ugandan *waragi*, and we took turns predicting the final score. I said Uganda would win 2-1. Allan picked his home country, too. Allan's friend leaned forward across the table.

"We will beat you here," he said, laughing, "and then we will beat you in Ituri."

Ituri is a province in the Eastern Congo.

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The next day, Allan, Jessie and I walked the short distance from our hotel to Amaharo National Stadium. We found our places on the hard concrete bleachers of the visitors section, which was situated directly behind one of the goals.

Allan's school friend called my cell phone to offer some good-natured taunting from his seats, located in the three-quarters of the stadium which were reserved for the home team. From where I was sitting, they looked like a sea of yellow and turquoise, the Rwandan national

colors. President Kagame, an avid soccer fan, sat in a well-guarded VIP section near midfield.

The biggest VIP on the Ugandan end was Uncle Money, a squat man in a drum major's uniform who serves as the Cranes' official mascot. He hopped about, waved his arms, and led the crowd in cheers. One went: "WE WILL BEAT THEIR BREASTS INTO THEIR BACKS." (It's a lot more inspirational in Luganda.) Every so often, the fans would hear someone among them speaking Kinyarwanda, and berate the enemy "spy" until he or she slunk away.

All the pageantry and bleacher subplots were fun to watch. Sadly, the same could not be said for the match, which was stultification itself.

Uganda's defense is strong, but the team always has trouble scoring goals. Throughout the match in Kigali, the Cranes moved the ball up and down the Amaharo's patchy turf, penetrating close to the goal. But they could never put the ball away when it counted. Early in the match, Uganda caught a break when Rwandan goalie Mossi collided with one of his defenders. But the ensuing shot went harmlessly wide.

After that, things settled down. Neither team seemed capable of putting together more than three consecutive passes. The half ended with the score still 0-0.

At halftime, the soccer analysts among us dissected the game, and agreed that the Ugandans had blown too many opportunities. "We should have used Bush's strategy," Allan said. "Shock and awe."

The second half, everyone agreed, was sure to be different. But if anything, the Cranes were even more lethargic after the break.

Then, about 15 minutes from the end of the game, the Ugandans won a corner kick. As the Cranes were setting up to take the kick, a shoving match broke out in front of the goal. The referee charged into the melee and began pushing players apart.

"What happened?" I asked Allan.

Allan pointed down to the Rwandan goal, which was directly in front of us. The Ugandan players were complaining that Mossi had tied something to the back corner of the net. From the stands, it was tough to make out what it was. It looked like a piece of black string. All around us, murmurs of *juju*—witchcraft—were exchanged among the Ugandan fans.

Athletes are a universally superstitious bunch. This is understandable: Every athlete knows that, for all the skill he or she may possess, winning or losing is often determined by pure, dumb luck. The Washington Senators won the seventh game of the 1924 World Series when,

not once but twice, routine ground balls took freakish hops over the New York Giants' third baseman's head, producing three runs and a 4-3 victory. In 1988, the Philadelphia Eagles saw their seemingly inexorable march to the Super Bowl halted when, in the midst of a comeback against the Chicago Bears, a large fog bank settled over Soldier Field, blinding everyone.

These are random events, beyond anyone's control. But control—over one's body, over the flight of a ball—is the essence of athletics. So it's not surprising that many players develop methods they believe will influence the random, and keep luck on their side. Wade Boggs, the longtime Boston Red Sox star, religiously ate chicken before every game he played. Manager Gene Mauch would refuse to wash his uniform after a win. (Fortunately, he spent much of his career managing the Philadelphia Phillies, so odor was not a big problem.)

In African soccer, as in African society as a whole, many players believe that the whims of fate are not random at all, but rather the product of supernatural intervention. This makes *juju* a potent psychological weapon. Ardent fans will do all sorts of outlandish things to intimidate the opposing team: sacrifice animals; bury magic trinkets beneath the field; splatter the opposing team's hotel with blood. One Ugandan professional team is famous for inserting charms inside the ball itself. Most of the Ugandan professional teams keep a *jajja* (witchdoctor) on staff. To neutralize the home team's *juju*, visiting play-



A Ugandan fan waves his national flag in the visitors' section.

ers will sometimes urinate on the goal posts before the match.

Now, with the match in progress, urination didn't seem to be an option. Instead, the Ugandan players were demanding that Mossi remove whatever it was he had tied to his net. The referee told the goalie to take it down, too. Mossi refused.

For several minutes, the standoff continued. At one point, the referee picked up the ball and began running for the sideline, as if he was going to award a forfeit to the Cranes. The Ugandan fans cheered wildly. Rwandan supporters lit flares and began waving them around, as if to signal that things could get nasty if the game were called off.

Finally, Mossi gave in to the referee, and untied the string. The Ugandans took their corner kick, and immediately lost the ball to Rwanda. The Rwandans counter-attacked, pushing up the field toward the Ugandan goal. While the referee was following the ball, Mossi scampered back to his net, and furtively tied his talisman back on. The Ugandan fans screamed, but the referee didn't notice.

A few moments later, a Ugandan player broke away from the Rwandan defense, leaving him one-on-one with Mossi. Everyone in our section jumped to their feet: It was the Cranes' best chance all game. The Ugandan ripped a shot from point-blank range, but Mossi leaped and blocked it. It was a fantastic save, almost... supernatural.

That was the way the match ended: scoreless. Afterwards, Ugandan fans jeered as Mossi untied the black string from the net. Jessie, the radio reporter, walked around interviewing the disgruntled and dejected. "Have you seen their *juju*?" one yellow-clad Ugandan protested to her. "Is that fair? This is what these Rwandans do!"

Out on the field, Mossi had dropped to his knees. For a moment, I thought he was praying. But then I saw he was digging in the dirt. He had buried some more magic trinkets there. Backups, I guess.

"Their charms were strong," Allan said, resignedly.

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The Ugandan soccer authorities had expected to win in Kigali, and they vented their disappointment in the usual fashion: They fired the coach. Paul Hasule was a popular former national team player, but he was not much of a strategist, his critics said. (Subsequently, a FIFA official claimed Hasule had been demanding bribes from players in return for naming them to the national team roster. The former coach has vehemently denied the allegation.) The man introduced as Hasule's replacement had an impeccable soccer pedigree. Pablo Pedro Pasculli had played on Argentina's 1986 World Cup championship team (he was a roommate of the legendary Diego





*Players battle for the juju as the police and referees rush in to break up the scuffle. (Photo courtesy of The Monitor)*

Maradona), and he had experience coaching in Italy.

On the radio, controversy raged about whether changing coaches just three weeks before such a crucial match was a masterstroke, or a sign of desperation. Most fans were furious. Why in its moment of need, they asked, had Uganda had gone looking for aid from an Argentine?

FUFA officials further inflamed the issue when, shortly before the big match, they announced they had recruited three talented new players onto the national team. There was a small catch—the players were Congolese. But that was no problem, the soccer authorities said: A hasty naturalization was in the works. The AM/FM nationalists howled that Ugandan players were being replaced by foreign mercenaries. (Cultures may vary, it seems, but sports-talk radio is the same the world over.) It didn't hurt the xenophobes' case when, on the day of the match, one of the three Congolese ringers was sighted entering the Ugandan locker room wearing a t-shirt bearing the gaunt visage of Paul Kagame.

In the end, though, the question of the Congolese's loyalty hardly mattered. Two of the three players were removed from the lineup just before kickoff when it was discovered that, apparently because of bureaucratic in-fighting at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, they had never been issued their Ugandan passports.

By this time, it was clear that the coaching change was backfiring, too. Maradona's roommate was not turn-

ing Uganda into Argentina. Pasculli showed up late for practices, and reportedly showed far greater interest in sampling Uganda's beers than in honing Uganda's players' skills. Complicating matters, Pasculli didn't speak any English, and the local soccer authorities thwarted plans to have the coach's female translator sit beside him during the game. Everyone knows it is bad luck to have to have a woman on the bench, they explained.

Meanwhile, the players were preoccupied with another kind of superstition. They wondered what Mohammed Mossi would be up to. The Rwandan goalie might have been able to get away with his magical mischief in Rwanda's home stadium. But Namboole was another matter.

In retrospect, the potential for an ugly confrontation was obvious. "It happened in Kigali when we first went there, the *juju*," sportscaster James Opoka said on a television special devoted to witchcraft and soccer, which aired on the national station shortly after the match. "When Rwanda came here, it was bound to happen [again]."

So when, midway through the first half of the rematch at Namboole, Mossi reached down and touched his little black pouch, it was clear trouble was coming.

Along the Ugandan bench, a counterattack was organized. The portly coach of the junior national squad stole around back of the Rwandan goal to do reconnaissance. Another team official—more of a hanger-on, re-

ally—slipped in close to the net. While Mossi’s back was turned, he started trying to untie the mysterious black pouch.

When Mossi realized someone was trying to make off with his *juju*, he went berserk, running off the field in pursuit of the would-be thief, who scampered away. The referee stopped play, and both teams rushed toward the Rwandan goal. Now the Ugandan players tried to get the black pouch loose. A fight broke out. Fists flew. Players grappled with one another, trying to get hold of Mossi’s magic. A half-dozen or more police officers jumped into the fray, trying to break things up. (Subsequently, the Rwandan team claimed that the cops cracked several of their players over their heads with their batons.)

One player, Ugandan midfielder Abubaker Tabula—the one who had had two near-scores denied by the goalposts—emerged from the melee, the black pouch in his hand, and dashed back toward the safety of his bench. Two Rwandans pursued him down the field. Tabula, still running, turned around and held up the *juju* to taunt the Rwandans. A Ugandan blindsided one of the pursuers, like a blocker on a punt return. But the other one caught Tabula by the back of his shirt and threw him down hard to the ground. The fight moved to midfield, joined by some blue-uniformed local militiamen and a couple of fans who had jumped down out of the stands.

The game was stopped for 30 minutes, as medics with stretchers tended to the wounded and the stadium’s public address announcer appealed for calm in the stands. For a long time, Tabula lay on his back along the sideline, writhing in pain. (He would later claim the some of the Rwandan players bit him.) Blood was gushing from the

forehead of Rwandan player Jimmy Gatete.

Remarkably, the referees didn’t kick anyone out of the game; no player was even shown the yellow card of warning.

The Rwandans initially refused to return to the field. But the referees threatened to award the Ugandans a forfeit, and eventually, both teams walked back onto the pitch. The Rwandans all wore sullen expressions. Except Mossi, that is, who pulled a couple of neat flips on his way back out to the goal. When he got there, he pulled out another black pouch and tied it triumphantly to his net. The Ugandan fans jeered.

More than 50 riot police, wearing visors and twirling batons, took positions encircling the pitch. A message flashed up on the scoreboard: “Management and Staff Warmly Welcome Our Brothers from Rwanda to the National Stadium.”

The Cranes had the ball when play started again. Immediately they went back on the attack. A shot deflected off a Rwandan player and out of bounds: a corner kick. The Ugandans set up to take the kick. Then, in the blink of an eye, Tabula was back in the goal, rooting around for Mossi’s backup *juju*. The goalie watched him for a moment, as if he too were astonished that it was all starting again. Then he snapped back to his senses and jumped on top of the midfielder.

Players from both teams piled on, like football players going for a fumble. As the referees and police officers tried to peel the players out of the scrum, Tabula managed to get up and break free. Somewhere along the way, he had lost his yellow jersey.



Stripped to his white undershirt, Tabula streaked down the field again. One of the Rwandans grabbed his undershirt and ripped that off. But Tabula made it to the sideline. He looked up at the crowd, grabbed his chest, and collapsed in a heap.

I looked at Allan. Neither of us could believe what we were seeing. I leaned down to the guy sitting in front of me, a *Monitor* reporter named Mark Ssali. “What do you think Coach Pasculli thinks of all this?” I asked.

“He has a story to tell,” Ssali said.

It was dusk by now. When the match finally resumed after this second brawl, the Ugandans seemed to have lost all their momentum. The Rwandans attacked. Just three minutes after the restart, Jimmy Gatete, a bandage wrapped around his head and his shirt stained with blood, launched a shot on



(Above) The Rwandan players pursued Abubaker Tabula, ripping off his shirt in the process. (Right) But Tabula got away, still holding the Mossi’s mysterious object in his hand. When he made it to the sideline, he collapsed. (Photos courtesy of The New Vision)

goal. The Ugandan goalie deflected the ball right to a Cranes defender, whose feeble attempt to clear the ball out of danger landed right at Gatete's feet. The Rwandan put the ball in the open net, ripped off his bloody shirt and waved it around in celebration.

Gatete's goal in the gloaming effectively finished Uganda. There was a whole second half to play, but the Cranes didn't put up much of a fight. When the game ended, the scoreboard read: Rwanda 1, Uganda 0. The 45,000 fans filed quietly out of the stadium, knowing full well that, with the Africa Cup of Nations within their grasp, their Cranes had blown it.

The post-match recriminations fixed on the Ugandan players, who, the local sportswriters said, had fallen for the Rwandans' "psychological warfare and mind games." Up to the point that Mossi touched his little black pouch, and everyone started worrying about *juju*, they had played a wonderful game. Afterwards, they became so obsessed with witchcraft and fisticuffs that they forgot about other important aspects of the game, like defending and scoring. As Allan said, those charms were strong.

Predictably, the Argentine coach also came in for a fair share of abuse. Pasculli himself seemed utterly flummoxed by the turn of events. "I have never seen such an atmosphere in football," he told a press conference. "I have played in many countries, but this was just too much to bear." A few days later, he flew back to Buenos Aires, claiming he had to visit his sick father, and would soon return to prepare the team for its final match, against Ghana. But no one has seen him since.

After the match, the Rwandan team flew back to Kigali, where a reported 10,000 people were waiting to welcome them at the airport. From there, they marched through the streets to Amaharo National Stadium, where President Kagame presided over a raucous victory celebration. Some in the crowd reportedly chanted: "KISANGANI PHASE TWO." (It may sound poetic in Kinyarwanda.)

Lately, political hostilities between Uganda and

Rwanda have cooled a bit. The British government recently summoned Museveni and Kagame to a London sit-down, where they pledged to play nicely within their war-ravaged Congolese sandbox. But relations are still tense. In mid-June, the Rwandan government accused the Ugandans of stealing an important suitcase from a government official who was flying through Entebbe International Airport. (A diplomatic incident was averted when an American traveling on the same flight discovered he had picked up the bag by mistake.) Rwanda-backed rebels are marching again in the Congo, and Uganda's military is said to be deeply unsettled by the prospect of Rwanda occupying so much territory along Uganda's western border. On both sides, they say a reckoning is inevitable.

Uganda's campaign to qualify for the Africa Cup of Nations is now over. The Cranes played their last match against Ghana in Kumasi on June 21. Pasculli didn't show up for the match so an assistant coach took over. For a while it seemed as if he might engineer a miraculous upset. The Cranes scored early, and hung on to a 1-0 lead for most of the game. But then, with just six minutes left, Ghana evened the score, and the match ended as a 1-1 draw. The tie meant that, mathematically, there was no way Uganda could win the group and qualify for the big tournament.

Rwanda still had one match left to play, against Ghana in Kigali. It seemed like the Ghanaians were destined to be the principal beneficiaries of the mess at Namboole. They needed only a tie against Rwanda to advance. But Mohammed Mossi played another brilliant match, Jimmy Gatete scored a second-half goal, and the Rwandans were on their way to Tunisia with a 1-0 victory. Commentators called it one of the greatest upsets in the history of African soccer; no team representing a country as small as Rwanda had qualified for the tournament in decades.

Back in Kampala, Cranes fans gnashed their teeth and mourned their team's missed opportunities. Once again, Uganda had fought Rwanda, and once again, Rwanda had come out the winner. Revenge would have to wait. □

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## INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

### Fellows and their Activities

#### **Alexander Brenner** (June 2003 - 2005) • **EAST ASIA**

A Yale graduate (History) with a Master's in China Studies from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, Alex also worked as a French-language instructor with the Rassias Foundation at Dartmouth College, studied at the Universidad Complutense in Madrid, and served as a Yale-China teaching fellow at Zhongshan University in Guangzhou. Against the backdrops of China's recent accession to the World Trade Organization and the anointing of the new leadership in Beijing, Alex will examine how Chinese are adapting to economic and cultural globalization, both inside and far from the capital.

#### **Martha Farmelo** (August 2001- 2003) • **ARGENTINA**

A Georgetown graduate (major: psychology; minor, Spanish) with a Master's in Public Affairs from the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton, Martha is the Institute's Suzanne Ecke McColl Fellow studying gender and public policy issues in Argentina. Married to an Argentine economist and mother of a small son, Martha has been involved with Latin America all her professional life, having worked with Catholic Relief Services and the Inter-American Development Bank in Costa Rica, with Human Rights Watch in Ecuador and the Inter-American Foundation in El Salvador, Uruguay and at the UN World Conference on Women in Beijing.

#### **Andrew Rice** (May 2002 - 2004) • **UGANDA**

A former staff writer for the *New York Observer* and a reporter for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and the Washington Bureau of *Newsday*, Andrew is spending two years in east-central Africa, watching, waiting and reporting the possibility that the much-anticipated "African Renaissance" might begin with the administration of President Yoweri Museveni. Andrew won a B.A. in Government from Georgetown (minor: Theology) in 1997 after having spent a semester at Charles University in Prague, where he served as an intern for *Velvet* magazine and later traveled, experienced and wrote about the conflict in the Balkans.

#### **Matthew Rudolph** (January 2004-2006) • **INDIA**

When work toward a Cornell Ph.D. in International Relations is finished, Matthew will begin two years as a Phillips Talbot South Asia Fellow looking into the securitization and development of the Indian economy.

#### **Matthew Z. Wheeler** (October 2002-2004) • **SOUTHEAST ASIA**

A former research assistant for the Rand Corporation, Matt is spending two years looking into proposals, plans and realities of regional integration (and disintegration) along the Mekong River, from China to the sea at Vietnam. With a B.A. in liberal arts from Sarah Lawrence and an M.A. from Harvard in East Asian studies (as well as a year-long Blakemore Fellowship in Thai language studies) Matt is also examining long- and short-term conflicts in Burma, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia.

#### **James G. Workman** (January 2002 - 2004) • **SOUTHERN AFRICA**

A policy strategist on national restoration initiatives for Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt from 1998 to 2000, Jamie is an ICWA Donors' Fellow looking at southern African nations (South Africa, Botswana, Mozambique, Zambia and, maybe, Zimbabwe) through their utilization and conservation of freshwater supplies. A Yale graduate (History; 1990) who spent his junior year at Oxford, Jamie won a journalism fellowship at the Poynter Institute for Media Studies and wrote for the *New Republic* and *Washington Business Journal* before his years with Babbitt. Since then he has served as a Senior Advisor for the World Commission on Dams in Cape Town, South Africa.

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