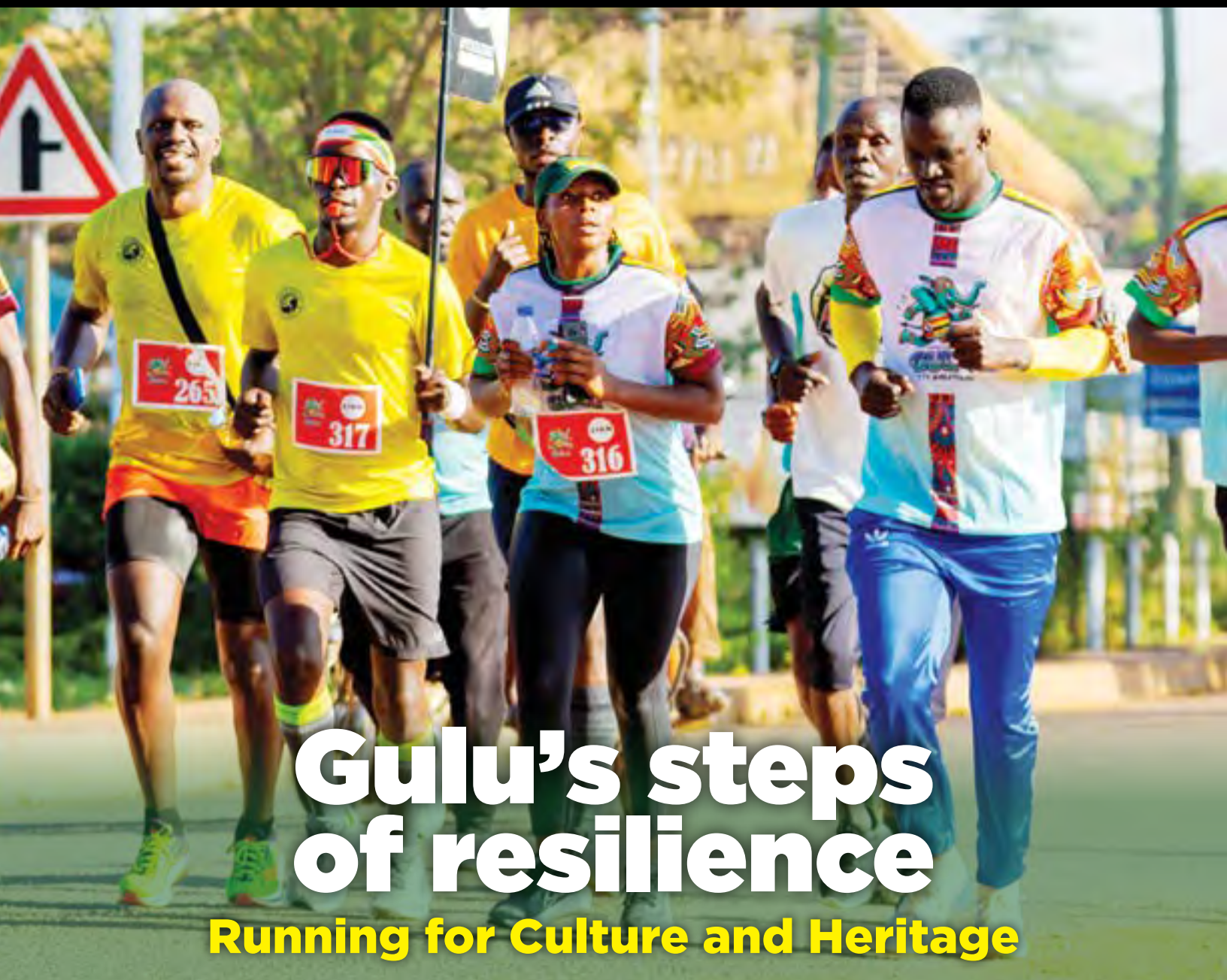


GULU

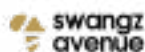
CITY MARATHON

December 2025
Issue: 001



Gulu's steps of resilience

Running for Culture and Heritage





THANK YOU AND WELCOME!

Thank you to all our partners and sponsors who powered last year's Gulu City Marathon – your belief laid the foundation for everything we continue to build. Your support helped transform an idea into a movement.

*As we welcome this year's partners and sponsors, we celebrate your commitment to community, culture, and athletic excellence. Together, we keep Gulu running – stronger, prouder, and further. **Apwoyo matek!***

Last year's partners and sponsors



This year's partners and sponsors



Contents



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Sports nutritionist Regina Nantege breaks down how the right food, fluids, and electrolytes can transform your performance from the first stride to the final sprint.

24 Running on vibes: One early morning changed everything
I didn't set out to become "Mr Vibes," a pacer, or a guy who plans his weekends around races. I just woke up one morning in 2021 at 5 o'clock.



Running, recovery, resilience: My runner, physiotherapist journey
Running has been part of my life since primary school, and I've learned that recovery is just as crucial as training. Here's why I believe every runner should prioritise their body as much as their mileage.

EDITOR'S PICK >>

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Running: my safe place
I'm Mercy Auma, a proud daughter of Gulu, Uganda. Running has been my companion, my therapy, and my way to honour my roots. Through every stride.



Editor's Note

“Gulu deserves honesty, not ornament - a city complicated, compelling, and endlessly rising.”



Running towards the future

There are projects you take on because they are assignments, and then there are those that tug at something deeper – memory, place, purpose.

This magazine sits firmly in the second camp. From the first sketches, it felt less like producing pages and more like stitching together the soul of a community that has run, healed, rebuilt, and imagined again.

Gulu is not merely a backdrop; it is the story. Its streets, its laughter, its stubborn resilience – the way it carries both the weight of what it has survived and the lightness of what it now reaches for.

The Gulu City Marathon has become one of those rare spaces where all of that converges.

Sweat and celebration, competition and communion, a reminder that movement – literal and otherwise – is how we keep choosing the future.

These pages have been shaped by countless voices: runners chasing their limits, organisers refusing to settle, partners who believed in an idea before it became an event, and a city that has taught all of us that hope is a discipline.

We have told these stories as truthfully as we could – sometimes with a soft hand, sometimes with a sharper pen – because Gulu deserves honesty, not ornament. Complicated, compelling, endlessly rising.

My hope is that this magazine does more than inform; that it invites you to feel the pulse of the place, to appreciate the effort behind the spectacle, and perhaps to lace up your own shoes next time.

Thank you for reading – and for running this journey with us.

Andrew Muanguhya

Editor-in-Chief, Gulu City Marathon Magazine 2025

DESIGN: MIKE MUSAASIZI | **PHOTOS:** CRUISE MEDIA, ZEPHYR MEDIA AND JONES

Message

Running together, governing with purpose

As we gather for this year's marathon, I am reminded that every great race is built not only on the strength of its runners, but also on the strength of its governance. Just as athletes rely on discipline, fairness, and teamwork to reach the finish line, so too does our marathon rely on clear structures, transparent decision-making, and accountability to ensure its success.

Good governance is the unseen marathon behind the scenes. It safeguards the trust of our sponsors, partners, and community. It ensures that every voice - whether majority or minority - is respected, and that decisions are made with integrity and inclusivity. It is what allows us to grow sustainably, protect our values, and inspire confidence in all who join us.

This race is more than a competition; it is a celebration of community, culture, and resilience. By embedding strong governance, we honour not only the athletes but also the volunteers, organisers, and stakeholders who make this event possible. Together, we uphold fairness, protect our shared vision, and create a legacy that future generations can build upon.

As you run today, know that you are part of something larger: a marathon that is governed with care, fuelled by community, and driven by purpose. May your strides remind us all that discipline, fairness, and unity -- on the track and off -- are what carry us forward.

On behalf of the Board, I thank you for your trust, your participation, and your belief in this marathon. Together, we run not only for victory, but for values that endure.

Mark Ongom

Chairperson of the Board.

“ This race is more than a competition; it is a celebration of community, culture, and resilience.”



Foreword

Francis
Gimara,
Chairperson Gulu
City Organising
Committee



Welcome to another exciting celebration

It is with immense pride and joy that I welcome you to the Gulu City Marathon Magazine, a special edition dedicated to one of Uganda's most inspiring sporting and cultural events. The Gulu City Marathon, organised by the Great North Run Company, has quickly grown into a beacon of hope and celebration, embodying the theme "Running for Culture and Heritage."

This marathon is not just about kilometres covered but rather about the journey of a city and its people. Gulu, once defined by conflict, now stands tall as a symbol of resilience, peace, and progress. Through this marathon, we honour the transformation and invite runners, spectators, partners and well-wishers to be part of a commemorative story.

We are proud to announce that the Gulu City Marathon is now a world-certified marathon, officially recognised by the Uganda Athletics Federation. This certification places Gulu among the ranks of internationally accredited races, ensuring that athletes' performances are recognised globally and that the event meets the highest standards of organisation, safety, and competitiveness.

The event is enriched by a Cultural Expo and Gala, showcasing the unique traditions of the Acholi people through music, dance, food, and storytelling that remind us of the importance of preserving heritage while embracing modern unity.

We owe special thanks to our valued partners including Tusker Lite, Uganda Baati, National Water and Sewerage Corporation, Uganda Communications Commission, Krystal Natural Mineral Water, Equity Bank, Uganda Wildlife Authority, Swangz Avenue and Buzz Activate, CFAO Mobility, Paxtel and GASP for their collaboration and partnership. It is the spirit of collaboration and partnership that fills the Gulu City Marathon with such vibrant energy,



creativity, and a true sense of community. Together, we transform this event into more than a race, it becomes a celebration of unity, resilience, and shared purpose.

Athletes will experience a course that winds through Gulu's historic landmarks, scenic neighbourhoods, and vibrant streets, offering both a competitive edge and a cultural adventure. Whether you are running the 42km full marathon, 21km half marathon, 10km race, or the 5km fun run, every step is a stride toward connection and celebration.

Beyond the competition, the marathon is driven by a charity mission: 10% of the registration proceeds will directly support the Martin Alier Skilling Centre. This centre will empower youths in Northern Uganda by equipping them with the skills needed to enhance their livelihoods. This ensures that the impact of the marathon extends far beyond the finish line, touching lives and shaping futures.

Spectators can look forward to a Finisher's Festival filled with music, dance, and local cuisine, alongside recovery zones, refreshment stations, and medal

ceremonies. Safety remains paramount, with medical teams and security personnel ensuring a secure and enjoyable experience for all.

As we are preparing to meet at Kaunda Grounds, let us remember that this marathon is not only about running, but also about celebrating culture, honouring resilience, and building unity. Together, we write a new chapter for Gulu City, one that echoes in the footsteps of hope and pride.

On behalf of the organising committee, I invite you to join us in this unforgettable journey. Lace up, cheer loud, and let us run for culture, heritage, and the future of Northern Uganda.

See you at the finish line.


Francis Gimara

Chairperson Gulu City Organising Committee

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Message



His Royal Highness,
Rwot Onen David
Acana II, Paramount
Chief of the Great
Acholi

Acholi is home to timeless traditions

It is my honour to welcome all runners, partners, and guests to the second edition of the Gulu City Marathon. This event carries great significance for Acholi, for it brings people together in celebration of our unity, our identity, and the rich cultural heritage that defines our homeland.

As you run through our land, I invite you to experience the beauty that makes Acholi unique – from our vast plains and historic sites, to the warmth and generosity of our people. Gulu and Acholiland remain among Uganda's most culturally vibrant regions, home to timeless traditions, renowned hospitality, and some of the country's most scenic tourism gems, including the iconic Aruu Falls and the expansive wildlife corridors of the North.

I commend the organisers for dedicating part of the marathon's proceeds to support the Martin Alier Skilling Centre. This commitment to empowering youth through skills and opportunity aligns deeply with our values of community strength and shared progress.

To all participants, I wish you a meaningful and memorable experience.

Wan obedo wan — we are one people.



Message

Marathon offers more than a sporting challenge

I am pleased to welcome you to the Gulu City Marathon, one of the key events that highlights our city's growing reputation as a centre of culture, tourism, and athletic excellence. Gulu continues to position itself as a city of opportunity – where heritage meets innovation and where community spirit drives our development.

This year's marathon offers more than a sporting challenge. It is an opportunity for visitors and residents alike to appreciate the unique beauty of our city – from our wide, flat running terrain ideal for personal bests, to our vibrant cultural life, bustling streets, and growing tourism attractions. Gulu is steadily becoming a premier destination for both sport and culture in Northern Uganda.

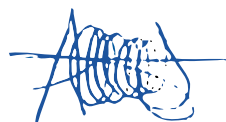
I applaud the organisers for their dedication to social impact, particularly through their support for the Martin Alier Skilling Centre. Investing in the youth of our region is essential for building a resilient and prosperous future.

To all runners, partners, and visitors, I extend my warmest wishes. May your experience in Gulu City be inspiring, fulfilling, and unforgettable.

Welcome to Gulu – Africa's rising cultural capital.



His Worship Alfred
Okwonga, Mayor of
Gulu City



Organisers



*Francis Gimara, Chairperson
Organising Committee*



*Bonita Mulelengi, General
Manager*



*Newton Mbazira, Finance
and Administration Lead*



*Ritah Nassejje,
Logistics Lead*



*Amviko Desire Diana,
Partnership Associate*



*Dr Anthony Ocaya,
Chairperson Gulu
Organising Committee*



*Christine Lutara,
Co-Chairperson Gulu
Organising Committee*



*Bernard Loum,
Vice Chairperson Gulu
Organising Committee*

Organisers



*Latigi Lamaro Fiona Vivia,
Secretary Gulu Organising
Committee*



*Angwech Annet Peace, Gulu
Finance & Admin Committee*



*Simon Peter Otine, Race
Director*



*Julius Nkuraija -
Co - Race Director*



*Dusman Okee Junior,
Security Lead*

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Wasswa Emma
- Kansabe Maxiline
- John Paul Kiffasi
- David Otto Labejja
- Jacqueline A. Tukdel
- Anyuru Borris
- Lilliane Agwang
- Lydia Angwech
- Ann Akidi
- Brenda Licholu

UGANDA BAATI LTD: BUILDING SOLUTIONS FOR A GROWING UGANDA

Uganda Baati Limited (UBL) is a cornerstone of Uganda’s building materials industry. Founded in 1964, it is East Africa’s leading manufacturer of steel roofing sheets and is part of the Safal Group, the largest steel roofing company in Africa.

UBL brings world-class coating technology to Uganda, including the patented Aluminium Zinc (ZincAL) system, which delivers durable, resilient, and aesthetically appealing building solutions. Guided by the vision “An Africa Built with Pride” and core values of excellence, integrity, and care, UBL remains committed to both business success and sustainable community impact.

Comprehensive Product Portfolio:

UBL offers a wide range of roofing and steel solutions to meet diverse architectural needs:

CATEGORY	PRODUCT	SHORT DESCRIPTION
Roofing Sheets	CoverMax	Trapezoidal roofing sheet suitable for domestic and light-commercial buildings, with flexibility for curved designs.
	Resincot	Factory-painted ZincAL-coated sheets offering long-lasting colour, corrosion resistance, and premium finish.
	Dumuzaz	A high-strength, durable steel roofing solution engineered for superior weather resistance, long-lasting performance, and wide application across residential, commercial, and industrial buildings.
Steel Tile Profiles	Versatile	Modern, steel-tile roofing with the classic look of clay tiles and superior durability.
	Romantile	Mediterranean-style steel tiles providing elegance, strength, and excellent rainwater channeling.
	Orientile	Premium steel tile profile designed for high-end aesthetics and enhanced rainwater harvesting efficiency.
	Lifestile (Stone-Coated)	Lightweight, stone-coated roofing tiles that offer fire resistance, UV protection, and superior acoustic comfort.
Specialty & Industrial Solutions	Pipes and Hollow Sections	High-strength steel pipes and hollow sections suitable for construction, fabrication, and industrial frameworks.
	Structural Steel	Heavy-duty steel for building frames, trusses, and industrial structures.
	Rainwater Harvesting Systems	Gutters and accessories engineered to optimize water collection and durability in all climates.
	Ventilation Systems	Roof ventilators and louvres designed to enhance natural airflow and reduce heat in large buildings.

CATEGORY	PRODUCT	SHORT DESCRIPTION
Building Systems & Accessories	SAFBUILD (Pre-Engineered Buildings)	Prefabricated steel building solutions for war houses, factories, churches, markets, and schools—engineered for speed, strength, and efficiency.
	SAFDECK	Structural steel decking used in multi-storey buildings to support concrete floors and reduce overall construction weight.
	Butyl Tape	High-adhesion sealing tape for joints in steel buildings, improving waterproofing and increasing roof strength.
	Ventilators & Louvres	Passive ventilation systems made of corrosion-resistant steel or aluminium for industrial and commercial structures.
	Fixtite Fasteners	Premium coated screws and nails engineered to match Uganda Baati roofing sheets for long-term installation integrity.
	CLEARDEK Polycarbonate Sheets	Transparent or translucent polycarbonate sheets that provide natural lighting for industrial, commercial, and greenhouse applications.
	UltraSpan	UBL's pre-engineered cold-formed steel roof truss system, made from high-tensile ZincAl steel (0.5–2.0mm), is a strong, durable, affordable, & easy-to-install solution designed with patented software for residential, institutional, commercial, and industrial use.
	SafCool	SafCool delivers efficient, durable, and cost-effective cooling solutions designed for residential, commercial, and industrial applications, ensuring reliable temperature control and energy efficiency
	SafSolar	SafSolar provides reliable, high-efficiency solar power solutions that are easy to install, durable, and cost-effective, serving residential, commercial, and institutional energy needs with clean, sustainable power.

Broader Impact: Safal Uganda Baati Foundation

Through the *Safal Uganda Baati Foundation*, UBL invests in social transformation across **Shelter, Health, Education, and Environment**:

- **Shelter & Education:** Re-roofing Kiwale Primary and building new classrooms at Nyamifura Primary improved learning environments for thousands of children.
- **Health & Community Wellbeing:** Clinics in Kampala and Tororo provide subsidized healthcare, while initiatives like the Rotary Cancer Run raise awareness and support national health projects.
- **Environment & Youth Empowerment:** Over 20 hectares of reforested land, 5,800+ seedlings, and youth programs in eco-friendly skills and income-generating activities demonstrate commitment to sustainability and empowerment.

The Foundation has been recognized nationally as Community Development Champion of the Year, partnering with organizations like the National Forestry Authority, PSFU, and Rotary to scale impact. Through these initiatives, UBL demonstrates that its commitment extends beyond roofs, building a healthier, greener, and more empowered Uganda.

Our Brands



DUMUZAS

MaxCover



SAFDECK





From war to the start line: Gulu's long walk back

This magazine does not aim to retell every chapter of the war - that story is too vast, too intricate - but it would be incomplete without acknowledging the weight of history that shaped today's joy.

Andrew Mwanguhya

For anyone who grew up in Northern Uganda, the memory of war is not an abstract recollection left to documentaries or footnotes.

It is a lived experience. The conflict between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Government of Uganda lasted nearly two decades, beginning in the late 1980s and stretching deep into the 2000s.

At its height, it was one of the world's most brutal and least understood wars.

Killings, abductions, displacements

The LRA, led by Joseph Kony, waged a campaign characterised by mass abductions, mutilations, killings, and terror that infiltrated daily life.

Estimates suggest that over 60,000 children were abducted, forced into becoming soldiers, porters, 'wives', or tools of psychological





warfare.

At the peak of displacement, roughly 1.8 million people in Northern Uganda – the majority of the Acholi population – lived in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps.

These camps, overcrowded and underserved, became entire towns of trauma, hope, and suspended life.

Human Rights Watch, UNICEF, and various UN agencies consistently flagged Northern Uganda as one of the world's worst humanitarian crises at the time.

Night commuting – thousands of children walking from villages to town centres for safety – became a visible symbol of fear.

Gulu, then a town, was the heart of these nightly migrations, with bus parks, verandas, hospitals, and empty schoolrooms becoming improvised dormitories.

The war formally ebbed after 2006 when the LRA fled Uganda's borders, but its aftershocks lingered.

Slow, steady, stubborn recovery

Homes had to be rebuilt. Families re-stitched. Former abductees reintegrated into communities also wounded. The psychological debris was heavier than the physical one. The psychological debris was heavier than the physical one.

And yet, in that quiet space after the war, Gulu began to rise. Slowly, stubbornly, steadily.

The city rediscovered its rhythm – in business, in education, in art, in sport.

The scars remain, but they coexist with something brighter: the refusal to be defined by suffering.

If anything, the years that followed revealed a community whose resilience had been forged under the harshest conditions imaginable.

Enter Gulu City Marathon

The Gulu City Marathon stands in that lineage of renewal. Every step taken on its streets is layered with memory.

These are roads once marked by fear; now they echo with cheering, colour, music, and the determined footfalls of people chasing personal victories.

Sport has a way of reframing identity, and here it has become a form of collective healing – a declaration that Gulu is not merely surviving; it is thriving, imagining, celebrating.

This magazine does not aim to retell every chapter of the war – that story is too vast, too intricate – but it would be incomplete without acknowledging the weight of history that shaped today's joy.

Because to appreciate Gulu's renaissance, you must understand what it walked through. And how far it has run since.





Gulu City Marathon 2025: Celebrating our cultural heritage and resilience

The Great North Run Company Ltd. proudly presents the Second Annual Gulu City Marathon – a vibrant celebration of Gulu’s rich cultural heritage and remarkable resilience.

Gulu’s transformation from a region impacted by conflict to a thriving centre of peace and development is an inspiring story, and this marathon serves as a powerful symbol of that journey.

The inaugural Gulu City Marathon in 2024 was a resounding success, attracting over 500 participants, including 11 international runners.

The event garnered significant media attention and showcased Gulu’s positive transformation.

Last year, 10% of the proceeds supported the Dero Kwan Education Initiative. In 2025, the same portion will go towards constructing the Martin Alier Youth Skilling Centre in Abole, Omoro District.

The marathon is now established as Uganda’s premier end-of-year race, held annually on the first Saturday of December. It blends athleticism, culture, and community, embodying the Acholi spirit of unity and endurance.

Objectives

- Promote tourism by showcasing Gulu City and Northern Uganda as top cultural and natural destinations.
- Preserve and celebrate Acholi culture through music, dance, and storytelling.
- Foster unity by bringing together people from diverse backgrounds to celebrate Gulu’s resilience.
- Encourage healthy lifestyles through sport and fitness awareness.
- Position Gulu City Marathon as Uganda’s leading end-of-year running event.
- Give back to the community – 10% of proceeds go to the Dero Kwan Initiative for education support.



Tourism and Cultural Highlights

Fort Patiko (Baker's Fort)

Historical site built by Sir Samuel Baker, used as a military fort and trading post. A symbol of Gulu's resilience and historical depth.



Amuru Hot Springs

Natural springs near the Amuru border, believed to have healing properties. A peaceful spot surrounded by scenic landscapes.



Ajai Wildlife Reserve

Located northwest of Gulu, home to diverse wildlife including antelopes, hippos, and birds. Conservation efforts are ongoing to restore its former glory.



Acholi Cultural Tours

Experience traditional Acholi homesteads, dances, and storytelling sessions.

Visitors learn about customs, songs, and folklore around the Wang Oo (traditional fireplace).



Gulu City Main Market

A bustling centre of crafts, food, and Acholi creativity. Perfect for authentic souvenirs.



Holy Rosary Church & Gulu Independence Monument

Iconic landmarks symbolizing Gulu's faith, resilience, and role in Uganda's national identity.

E-Services



Uganda Communications Commission has expanded the range of services available on its e-services portal. Clients can now sign up and apply for these services and even track the progress of their applications

Scan Here >>>

Equipment Type Approval
Online Data Communication
FM Broadcasting
Short Codes
Logical Channel Numbering
Postal & Courier Services



<https://www.ucc.co.ug/e-services/>



TUSKER LITE

at the heart of Uganda's marathon journey

Tusker Lite is proud to be part of Uganda's running story, supporting events that bring communities together, inspire healthy lifestyles, and celebrate achievement.

As a partner of the Gulu City Marathon, the brand is excited to contribute to its growth and humbled by how quickly the event has gained traction for its second edition. Tusker Lite's involvement reflects its commitment to creating meaningful moments in spaces that matter.

By supporting running events across Uganda, the brand helps energise local economies, promote active living, and strengthen community connections.

From the excitement at the start line to the fulfilment

at the finish line and the celebrations at the after-party, Tusker Lite amplifies every stage of the experience and shares memorable moments with consumers who celebrate, cheer, and engage with the brand.

Tusker Lite celebrates individuals who live fully, chase their passions, and embrace life with purpose - values that align with the spirit the Gulu City Marathon aims to inspire.

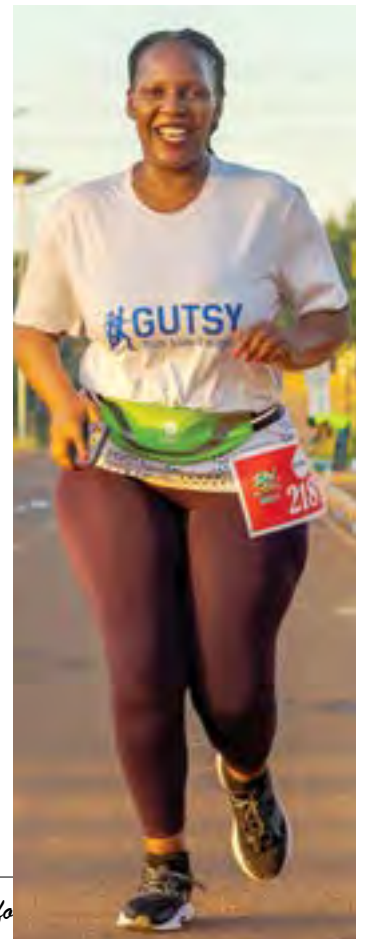
Drawing inspiration from the Tusker Lite Mt Rwenzori Marathon, the brand has gained valuable learnings on elevating the runner experience. Preparations for the Virunga Marathon, set for May 30, 2026, and the fifth Tusker Lite Mt Rwenzori Marathon are underway, with registration opening in February 2026 ahead of race day on August 22, 2026.





2024 In Gulu





Marathon route maps

MARATHON OVERVIEW

Date: Saturday, December 6, 2025

Location: Kaunda Grounds, Gulu City

Expected Attendance: 2,000 participants





Gulu City Marathon celebrates World Athletics certification

The Gulu City Marathon has officially secured full World Athletics certification for all its race routes – a major milestone placing it among internationally recognised road races. The certification exercise was led by Gavin Wright, one of only three A-grade route measurers in Africa, who spent two days in Gulu measuring the 42 km, 21 km, 10 km, and 5 km courses.

With this approval, athlete times recorded in Gulu are now globally valid and can count toward qualification

for major competitions, including the Olympics and Commonwealth Games. Gulu becomes only the second race in Uganda – after Kasese's Rwenzori Marathon – to achieve this status, strengthening its case for future World Athletics label race recognition.

Gulu City Mayor Alfred Okwonga welcomed the milestone, describing the marathon as more than a sporting event – a unifying platform that showcases culture, resilience, and the region's growing potential.

WORLD ATHLETICS
INTERNATIONAL MEASUREMENT CERTIFICATE

Name of Race Gulu City 10km		Distance 10000m
Location Gulu		Country RSA
Date of Race 06.12.2025	Date of Measurement 29.06.2025	Elevation Change 0m/km
Separation 0 % of race distance		
Name(s) of the measurer(s) Gavin Wright		World Athletics – AIMS Grade A
Country RSA	Certificate Number RSA2025-277	Expiry Date 31.12.2029
International Measurement Administrator Hugh Jones		Registered On 10.07.2025
Signed 		In cooperation with

WORLD ATHLETICS
INTERNATIONAL MEASUREMENT CERTIFICATE

Name of Race Gulu City Marathon		Distance 42195m
Location Gulu		Country RSA
Date of Race 06.12.2025	Date of Measurement 28.06.2025	Elevation Change 0m/km
Separation 0 % of race distance		
Name(s) of the measurer(s) Gavin Wright		World Athletics – AIMS Grade A
Country RSA	Certificate Number RSA2025-275	Expiry Date 31.12.2029
International Measurement Administrator Hugh Jones		Registered On 10.07.2025
Signed 		In cooperation with

WORLD ATHLETICS
INTERNATIONAL MEASUREMENT CERTIFICATE

Name of Race Gulu City Half Marathon		Distance 21097.5m
Location Gulu		Country RSA
Date of Race 06.12.2025	Date of Measurement 29.06.2025	Elevation Change 0m/km
Separation 0 % of race distance		
Name(s) of the measurer(s) Gavin Wright		World Athletics – AIMS Grade A
Country RSA	Certificate Number RSA2025-276	Expiry Date 31.12.2029
International Measurement Administrator Hugh Jones		Registered On 10.07.2025
Signed 		In cooperation with



Natural Attractions

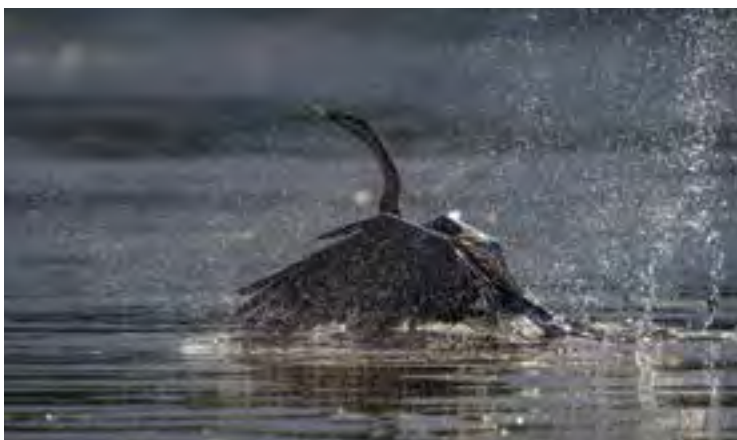
Murchison Falls National Park

Murchison Falls National Park sits on the shore of Lake Albert, in northwest Uganda. It's known for Murchison Falls. Park wildlife includes elephants and hippos, and there are chimpanzees in the Kaniyo Pabidi mahogany forest.



Lake Albert

Lake Albert is located right at the southern end of Murchison Falls National Park, where the Victoria Nile flows into it. Murchison Falls itself is where the Victoria Nile River narrows and plunges through a gorge before continuing on to Lake Albert





Hill Climbing

Gulu district has numerous solitary hills which offer an insight to enjoy hill climbing such as Moro hills, Kilak and Patiko hill.



Atiak Colobus Monkey

Atiak Forest Reserve near the Albertine Nile hosts black-and-white colobus monkeys, rare mammals, and diverse birdlife. Its savannah woodland and existing tourist trails position it as a promising eco-tourism and wildlife exploration site.



Guruguru Caves

Located 25 kilometres north of Gulu, the Guruguru Caves were a key refuge during the Lamogi Rebellion and hold rich cultural history, offering strong potential as a future heritage tourism site.



FROM PLAINS TO PEAKS AFTER GULU, TRY ALTITUDE

From Gulu's plains to Kasese's mountains — Uganda has some incredible roads to run. This August, the Tusker Lite Rwenzori Marathon welcomes you to Kasese — home to one of Africa's most scenic and challenging races.

Run: 5KM • 10KM • 21KM • 42KM

Early bird fee: UGX 50,000 / USD 50

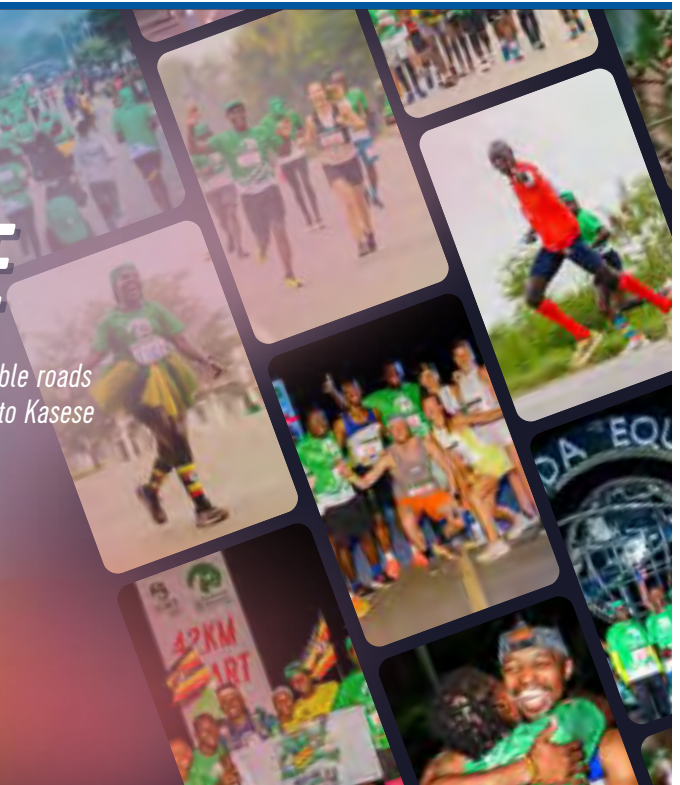
Location: Kasese, Western Uganda

22
August

CROSS THE EQUATOR IN AUGUST: www.rwenzorimarathon.com



@rwenzorimarathon





RUNNING

One early morning changed everything

I didn't set out to become "Mr Vibes," a pacer, or a guy who plans his weekends around races. I just woke up one morning in 2021 at 5 o'clock., couldn't fall back asleep, and decided to run. That simple, random choice ended up reshaping my entire life.

Shakur Kawanguzi

My name is Shakur Kawanguzi, though most people know me as Mr Vibes or Freedomboy.

My running journey didn't begin with ambition. It began in 2021, the day I woke up at 5:00 a.m. and just couldn't get back to sleep.

The world was quiet, the morning was wide awake, and I wondered what I could possibly do at that hour. Exercise came to mind. So I slipped on my lime green sneakers and went out for a run.

ON VIBES

It wasn't glamorous – I was sore from head to toe afterwards – but something clicked. I felt alive. Curious. Eager to see how far I could go if I made this a routine.

So I kept showing up. I tracked my runs on my digital watch, compared results, watched myself improve, and before I knew it... I was hooked.

Falling in love with running

Running quickly became more than exercise. It gave me freedom. It cleared my mind, boosted my energy, and became my escape and my lifestyle.

I loved discovering new places on foot, finding a rhythm between breath and stride, and being hyped up by fellow runners. And honestly — the vibes were unmatched.

Can't stop, won't stop

What started casually during lockdown became part of who I am. Posting my runs, chasing Strava kudos, joining the X/Twitter running school, posting monthly reports, becoming part of the Fast and Furious Runners Club – all of that shaped me.

At Fast and Furious, our Road Captain Simon Peter Otiine groomed me into a pacer, and later the Team Matooke Kla-Ebb monthly training runs pushed me even further. Running stopped being a hobby. It became my lifestyle, my identity, my community.

Why I'm coming back to Gulu

This will be my second time at the Gulu City Marathon. I ran 21km in the first edition and loved everything – the people, the energy, the flat and friendly course, the after party, and the whole vibe of being in a new city for the first time. Going back wasn't even a question.

I'm aiming to get my Comrades qualifier in Gulu and to pace the 42km runners. But that's just the start.

I'm excited for the medal, the culture festival the day before, the atmosphere, the support from the amazing people of Gulu, the after party, and the unity that the marathon brings every single year.

But most importantly, 10% of the proceeds support the Martin Alier Training Institute, a program focused on skilling and empowering young people.

That's something worth running for. This marathon uplifts the community, showcases northern Uganda's culture, and promotes our country. I'm proud – genuinely proud – to be part of it.

ABOUT SHAKUR

Shakur Kawanguzi, fondly known as Mr Vibes or Freedomboy, is a passionate runner, pacer, and member of Fast and Furious Runners Club and Team Matooke. What began as a casual dawn jog in 2021 has grown into a lifestyle rooted in community, discipline, and pure good energy.



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The background of the entire advertisement is a photograph of the Rwenzori Mountains. The peaks are jagged and covered in patches of snow and ice, set against a clear blue sky. Below the mountains, a layer of white clouds separates them from the savanna landscape in the foreground.

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cultural diversity—all
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RUNNING: MY SAFE PLACE

I'm Mercy Auma, a proud daughter of Gulu, Uganda. Running has been my companion, my therapy, and my way to honour my roots. Through every stride, it has given me strength, confidence, and a sense of home.

Mercy Auma

Im Mercy Auma, a proud daughter of Gulu, Northern Uganda. Running has always been more than exercise for me – it has been my safe place, my therapy, and a way to connect with my heritage and community.

My love for running began very early. At the age of three, I was already running short distances – 100m, 200m, and relays – and playing football, where running was part of every game.

But it wasn't until three years ago that long-distance running became part of my life.

Running clears the mind

One day, feeling stressed and overwhelmed, I laced up my shoes and hit the road. Something just clicked. Each stride cleared my mind, boosted my energy, and gave



ABOUT MERCY

Mercy Auma is a long-distance runner and advocate for resilience and wellness, and a proud daughter of Gulu, Uganda. Running has been especially empowering for her as a woman living with Cutaneous Lupus Erythematosus (CLE), a chronic autoimmune disease affecting the skin, diagnosed five years ago.



me confidence to tackle the day.

That first run led me to the Gutsy Bunch, a running group that welcomed me warmly and taught me the ropes of long-distance running.

With them, I discovered that running isn't just about endurance – it's about camaraderie, encouragement, and celebrating every small triumph along the way.

The companion I needed

Running has been especially empowering as a woman living with Cutaneous Lupus Erythematosus (CLE), a chronic autoimmune disease affecting the skin, diagnosed five years ago.

Some days are physically challenging, with sore joints and fatigue, but running has given me a sense of control, resilience, and hope. Even when my body feels weak, I take a step forward, reminding myself that I am capable of more than I think.

Gulu is home

The Gulu City Marathon holds a special place in my heart. Last year, I completed the full 42km distance, and this year I'm taking on the 21km.

Running in my hometown is more than a race – it's a celebration of my roots, culture, and community.

The flat, scenic course makes every step enjoyable, while the cheers and warmth of the people make me feel supported every moment. It's an environment that motivates me to push harder and run with pride.

For me, running has become a source of empowerment, joy, and healing. It has taught me that even in moments of uncertainty or challenge, we have the strength to move forward, to reclaim control, and to celebrate our own victories.

The road, the rhythm of my breath, and the encouragement of fellow runners have all combined to make running my sanctuary.

Participating in the Gulu City Marathon is special – it's a way to honour my journey, my hometown, and the supportive community that has shaped me.

For anyone looking for a transformative experience, I highly recommend it – every step is a step toward strength, confidence, and self-discovery.

RUNNING MY WAY:

Embracing strength, joy, and every mile

I'm a marathoner and budding ultramarathoner who runs not just for distance, but for empowerment, discovery, and the sheer joy of movement. My journey is my reminder and my message to other women that no one should ever put a limit on what we can do.

Anita Komukama

ABOUT ANITA

Anita Komukama is a Public Health Community Worker, Author, Motorcycle Enthusiast, Marathoner and budding Ultra Marathoner, adventure seeker, hiker and an ardent advocate for women's empowerment through sport.



As a recently crowned marathoner and emerging ultramarathoner, I believe in embracing the journey as much as the finish line. My approach to running is simple: take the sport seriously, but never forget to have fun.

I'm an adventure seeker at heart – a wanderluster, explorer, hiker, and lover of life.

My joy comes from movement, discovery, and the small triumphs that accumulate with every mile.

Running is both discipline and delight: a way to strengthen body and mind, reconnect with myself, and a constant reminder that we are capable of far more than we imagine.

Running is self-love

As a woman, running has become incredibly empowering. It's a statement of bodily resilience and self-love.

In a society that often dictates how women should look, move, or be, I want to embody confidence, authenticity, and the courage to run my own race – without needing to be the fastest or the winner.

My journey shows that anyone can chase big goals if they commit to the first step, and then the next.

The Gulu City Marathon is particularly meaningful to me. I once worked in communities here, and the connections I formed with

the people, culture, and rhythm of life stayed with me long after I left.

Homecoming

I was even given the name 'Aber,' a gesture that still warms my heart. Returning to race in a place that feels familiar and welcoming is more than an athletic experience; it's a homecoming.

I also look forward to the camaraderie among runners. The running community in Uganda is full of energy, encouragement, and support, and Gulu has a way of amplifying that spirit.

There's something powerful about gathering with people who understand the joy, pain, and pride of pushing your limits – everyone running their own story on the same stretch of road.

And, of course, the Acholi culinary delights make carb-loading a celebration of their own – yum!

Having completed multiple races this year, stepping up to the full marathon distance – 42 km – feels like the natural next chapter.

On December 6, I'm excited to test my endurance, celebrate how far I've come, and absorb everything Gulu has to offer.

Finally, I am inspired by the vision, organisation, and passion of Francis Gimara and his team, who create a memorable and meaningful Gulu City Marathon each year. I run this race with gratitude, pride, and joy.

42km

Full marathon distance – 42 km – feels like the natural next chapter.



TEAM MATOOKE

joins Gulu City Marathon for wellness, sports and tourism

Team Matooke Running Club, famous for its iconic Kampala–Entebbe monthly runs and its vibrant mix of professionals who proudly run as non-professionals, is once again on the move.

This time, we set our compass northward as we join the second edition of the Gulu City Marathon, happening on December 6.

True to our mission “to unite and mentor runners across Uganda with the goal of preparing them for ultra runs, full and half marathons, while promoting the health benefits of running,” we are thrilled to stand in solidarity. We are especially delighted to associate with our very own comrade and friend, Cde Snr. Francis Gimara, Advocate of the High Court of Uganda and unofficial Chief Entertainer on the marathon route.



Eng. Fred Lutaaya,
the Team Matooke
President, will lead
his runners at this
year's Gulu City
Marathon.

If you've never run with him before, wait until the 35km mark, where the true meaning of "faith without works is dead" becomes clear.

At that point, his humour becomes a rescue mission in itself, because that is where the marathon stops being a run and becomes a conversation with your ancestors.

As recreational runners, we carry a special responsibility to be beacons of sports, wellness and tourism in Uganda.

Every stride we take is a reminder that running is not just a sport – it is a movement, a lifestyle, and, occasionally, a comedy show, especially when you see grown adults negotiating with their own legs and heart at kilometre 41.

As we continue promoting sports tourism in Northern Uganda, Gulu and the greater northern region offer more than just a race.

The area is home to breathtaking tourist sites, thriving culture,

game parks, and iconic landscapes like the mighty waterfalls of northern Uganda.

December is the perfect time to slow down the year's chaos, breathe deeply, and reconnect with the beauty of the Pearl of Africa one stride at a time.

Team Matooke's participation goes beyond the finish line. We run to inspire others to embrace fitness, strengthen wellness, explore the country, and create lasting memories.

Whether you're training for your first marathon, chasing a personal best, or simply running for the chapati at the finish, remember that you carry the spirit of recreational runners across Uganda.

Eng. Fred Lutaaya
President, Team Matooke

FROM COURT TO COURSE:

After my volleyball career, I needed to keep going

By Gadafi Ssali

After years on the volleyball court, I discovered a new passion: running. From casual jogs to ultramarathons, it has become a journey of fitness, travel, and community for me.

Growing up, school recognition came from two things: academics or sports. I tried to straddle both worlds – not the best, not the worst, but always good enough to pick up the essentials of any game.

Growth meant choosing a path, and I chose tourism for my career and volleyball for sport.

To succeed, you have to specialise. I trained as a receiver and wide attacker, which took me places – I played for Kampala Amateur Volleyball Club (KAVC) and represented Uganda on the national team.

End of the road, new openings

But life and age catch up with you. New talent emerges, and eventually, you can't keep up. Yet volleyball gave me a gift: full-body workouts, aerobic endurance, and running as part of the routine.

I took up running casually for fun in 2009 by joining the Kampala Hash House Harriers – KH3, famously called a “drinking club with a running problem.” Exercise, friends, and a post-run drink? Perfect combination.

Shifting gears

Then came cross-border runs – the Naivasha Relay and Standard Chartered Nairobi Marathon – for fun, friendship, and the occasional drink afterward. By 2011, my goals shifted: training got more serious, and I sought bigger challenges.

Moving from marathons to ultramarathons was natural. The body and mind crave more, and running opens doors to new places. From Kenya and Tanzania to South Africa and the USA, I've run them all, and God willing – more to come.

Training hard changed my lifestyle – better





routines, healthier habits, and yes, better running gear. My simple mantra: if you don't want to suffer on the road, you have to train.

More than a race

Running isn't about money; it's about joy. The "On, On" cheers and congratulatory messages remind you that effort is seen and appreciated.

Along the way, I've met countless people, shared advice, and built friendships beyond running. The network makes me feel at home wherever I go.

Media coverage has amplified this journey, showing that running isn't just for the elite. Clubs like Team Matooke make activity accessible, inspiring people to tackle challenges they once thought impossible.

Running also means travel. Events like the Gulu City Marathon allow Ugandans to explore their country while boosting local economies. International races showcase Uganda and its athletes to the world.

God willing, there are still limits to push and achievements to chase. Running has been more than sport – it's a journey of discovery, discipline, and connection.

ABOUT GADAFI

Ssali Gadafi is a public servant at the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife, and Antiquities; former national volleyball player; avid marathoner and ultramarathoner.





RUNNING, RECOVERY, RESILIENCE:

My runner, physiotherapist journey

Olemukan Cosmas Okoboi

Running has been part of my life since primary school, and I've learned that recovery is just as crucial as training. Here's why I believe every runner should prioritise their body as much as their mileage.

I first fell in love with running as a young boy. In primary school, I watched my elderly neighbour move with energy that never seemed to fade, and I wanted to be like him.

That spark stayed with me through the years, shaping the way I approached movement, discipline, and life itself.

In high school, I considered myself a weakling and avoided contact sports. I didn't have the strength or stamina to push or tackle.

Tough choices

So I turned to running – a one-man game where progress was entirely in my hands. 'Pass me if you can' became my mantra, and running soon became a part of who I was.

In university, I became more competitive, but eventually I had to choose between pursuing sport or focusing on my studies.

ABOUT COSMAS

Olemukan Cosmas Okoboi is a recreational runner, physiotherapist, and sports massage therapist; passionate about empowering athletes and active individuals through performance and recovery.



I chose academics, yet I never gave up running. It remained a lifestyle, a constant teacher of discipline, patience, and perseverance.

I encourage everyone, especially children, to engage with running – it's more than sport; it's a classroom for life.

Physiotherapy

But running is only one half of the equation. Over the past five years, I've also been practicing sports massage therapy, and it has profoundly changed the way I approach training and recovery.

Recovery, I've learned, is not optional – it's essential. Without it, the body cannot absorb mileage, adapt to training, or reach its full potential.

Sports massage is a form of manual therapy that manipulates muscles, tendons, and ligaments to improve flexibility, reduce pain, and enhance performance.

Athletes, coaches, and recreational runners alike use it to prepare for competition, recover after exercise, and prevent injury.

Techniques such as joint mobilisation, stretching, pressure point therapy, and post-isometric relaxation allow the body to perform at its peak while staying safe.

Sports massage benefits

The benefits are remarkable: reduced muscle tension,

improved flexibility, faster recovery, injury prevention, enhanced performance, and even mental benefits such as reduced anxiety and improved mood.

Pre-event massage energises muscles and primes the mind, while post-event therapy clears waste products like lactate and helps the body reset.

Running taught me discipline. Massage taught me care. Together, they remind me that performance is about more than pushing harder – it's about understanding, respecting, and nurturing the body.

This dual perspective allows me to help other runners enjoy the sport safely, train effectively, and stay passionate about the journey.

For me, running and recovery are inseparable. One fuels the other. And the lessons extend far beyond sport: patience, resilience, and self-awareness are skills that shape life off the track as much as on it.

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Dear Runners,
We are GASP, Uganda's first Extended Producer Responsibility organisation and your Sustainability Partner for this race.

Our mission is simple: to turn waste into resources. As you run for the finish line, join us in running for a cleaner Gulu.

Your champion's spirit can make all the difference.

Your Green Race Plan
Start Smart: Carry a reusable bottle. Use the green bins placed after each water station for any waste.
Run with Purpose: Look for dedicated collection points 200m after hydration stations to dispose of plastics and general waste properly.
Finish with Legacy: Every item you discard correctly will be sorted and recycled by our network, giving it new life.
Together, we're not just managing waste; we're building a future where nothing is wasted. Run strong, run green.
For the circular economy,
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POWER EVERY STEP:

Sports nutrition for endurance athletes

Endurance isn't built on training alone - it's powered by smart fueling. Sports nutritionist **Regina Nantege** breaks down how the right food, fluids, and electrolytes can transform your performance from the first stride to the final sprint.

Imagine running or cycling for hours and feeling your body respond with strength instead of struggle.

That steady power comes from training supported by good nutrition. Your heart pumps more blood per beat, your lungs bring in more oxygen and your circulation delivers glucose, potassium, sodium and nutrients to every active muscle.

When the supply is steady, performance stays high. When it drops, efficiency falls quickly.

As a nutritionist, I have witnessed the dangers and benefits of sports nutrition during marathons and cycling events.

Personal experiences on multi-day mountain trails like Rwenzori Mountain have shown me that endurance rewards athletes who fuel and hydrate wisely.

With that foundation, let us break down what the body needs before, during and after your event.



1. PRE-RUN NUTRITION

■ **Up to three hours before:** Eat your normal balanced athletic plate. Include carbohydrates such as rice, sweet potatoes, cassava, matoke or kalo paired with protein and vegetables. Avoid high-fiber foods this close to the race because they can cause digestive discomfort.

■ **Hydration within 1 hour before:** Drink at least 300ml of water or a hot beverage of your choice to begin the race well hydrated.

■ **15 minutes before:** Take a quick source of carbohydrate such as fruit juice.

False pre-run myths

■ "I must eat double the food the day before." A normal balanced plate is enough.

■ "I need electrolytes the day before." Regular meals provide enough sodium and potassium when you are not sweating.

■ **Mistake:** Skipping meals, which forces the body to use stored glycogen too early.

2. DURING THE RUN

■ **Carbohydrates:** Take 30 to 60g per hour, equal to 300–600ml of sweetened drinks, 2–3 gels or 1 energy bar.

■ **Hydration: Drink** 300–600ml per hour in small sips, not more than 150 ml at once. Drink before thirst.

■ **Electrolytes explained:** Sweat removes sodium and potassium, minerals that help muscles contract and nerves transmit signals efficiently. Without them, fatigue, cramps and



ABOUT REGINA

Regina Nantege is a sports nutritionist and the founder of the Lya Dietitian App, dedicated to helping athletes fuel smarter and perform stronger. With hands-on experience supporting runners, cyclists, and hikers – including multi-day expeditions on the Rwenzori Mountains – she combines science and real-world insight to simplify nutrition for endurance performance.



poor coordination can appear. Runners, unlike hikers who can stop and sit to eat, cannot consume enough sodium and potassium-rich foods during a race to keep up with losses so use ORS or electrolyte tablets to replace both minerals in the right balance.



3. POST-RUN RECOVERY

Replenish Glycogen within 60 minutes. Combine carbohydrates and protein: yoghurt and bananas, cassava and beef stew, millet porridge with milk or a sweetened drink with roasted nuts.

■ **Hydration:** Drink at least 1ltr after a marathon to fully replace fluid lost during the run.

■ **Post-run mistake:** "I can eat anything because I ran for hours." A 42km run burns 1,600 to 2,800 Calories in four hours. Six beers and a plate of chips easily replace that, making fat loss difficult even with heavy training.



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Running has given me **PERSONAL FREEDOM**

Running has taught me discipline, resilience, and the joy of community. From a competitive swimming background to completing the Comrades Marathon with a Baker's cyst, my journey shows that running is as much about inner strength as it is about the miles.

Richard Latigo

Y *Allah wallah, Wallah Y'Allah!* That's the chorus that powers my runs – a chant that gives me both good vibes and an adrenaline rush.

For me, running is more than a personal mantra. It's about discovering the sharp contrast between my life in a professional suit and the freedom of fresh air on the open road.

I come from a swimming background, a world of discipline where every arm pull and flip turn is a battle against the water and oneself.

Running frees you

When I began short jogs as a pre-workout routine, I quickly realised running offered a different truth: freedom.

On the open road, I compete only with the scenery, the rhythm of my stride, and the feeling of life passing by.

Pace is personal. If you meet me on a run, you can fly past – it's not my choice – and my pace isn't yours.

This is personal

Running is deeply personal, yet it creates a profound sense of community.

Every runner knows the occasional snide remark from a bystander, but those are drowned out by the simple, coded





greeting of “On-on” from a fellow runner.

That encouragement can inject an unexpected high mid-run. It’s a reminder that the running community is about kindness, shared understanding, and lifting each other up.

This sense of belonging shines brightest at events like the Gulu City Marathon.

Running is accessible to everyone, and it promotes health, mental clarity, and personal discipline. It’s a moving meditation, a vital culture that balances the sedentary lifestyle so many of us lead.

Completing Comrades

My own running journey, though not extensive by some standards, has been defined by monumental challenges.

On June 8, I lined up for the Comrades Marathon – 89.9km from Pietermaritzburg to Durban in

South Africa.

I ran it with a baker’s cyst, a fluid-filled sac at the back of my knee that causes pain and stiffness.

Finishing that marathon, every step earned, gave me the smallest medal of immense personal meaning. It reminded me that running beyond the ordinary is not easy – it is discipline, pain, and perseverance combined.

So when I hit the pavement and chant Y’Allah Wallah, it’s not just adrenaline.

It’s an affirmation of the community around me, the discipline within me, and the quiet, mindful strength I find in putting one foot in front of the other – entirely on my own terms.

Running has taught me that anyone can run. It’s personal, liberating, and communal all at once. My message is simple: find your stride, discover your freedom, and let’s all run.

ABOUT RICHARD

Richard Latigo is a recreational runner and former competitive swimmer. He has completed ultra-distance events including the Comrades Marathon and is passionate about discipline, community, and using running as a path to personal freedom.

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Gulu City Marathon

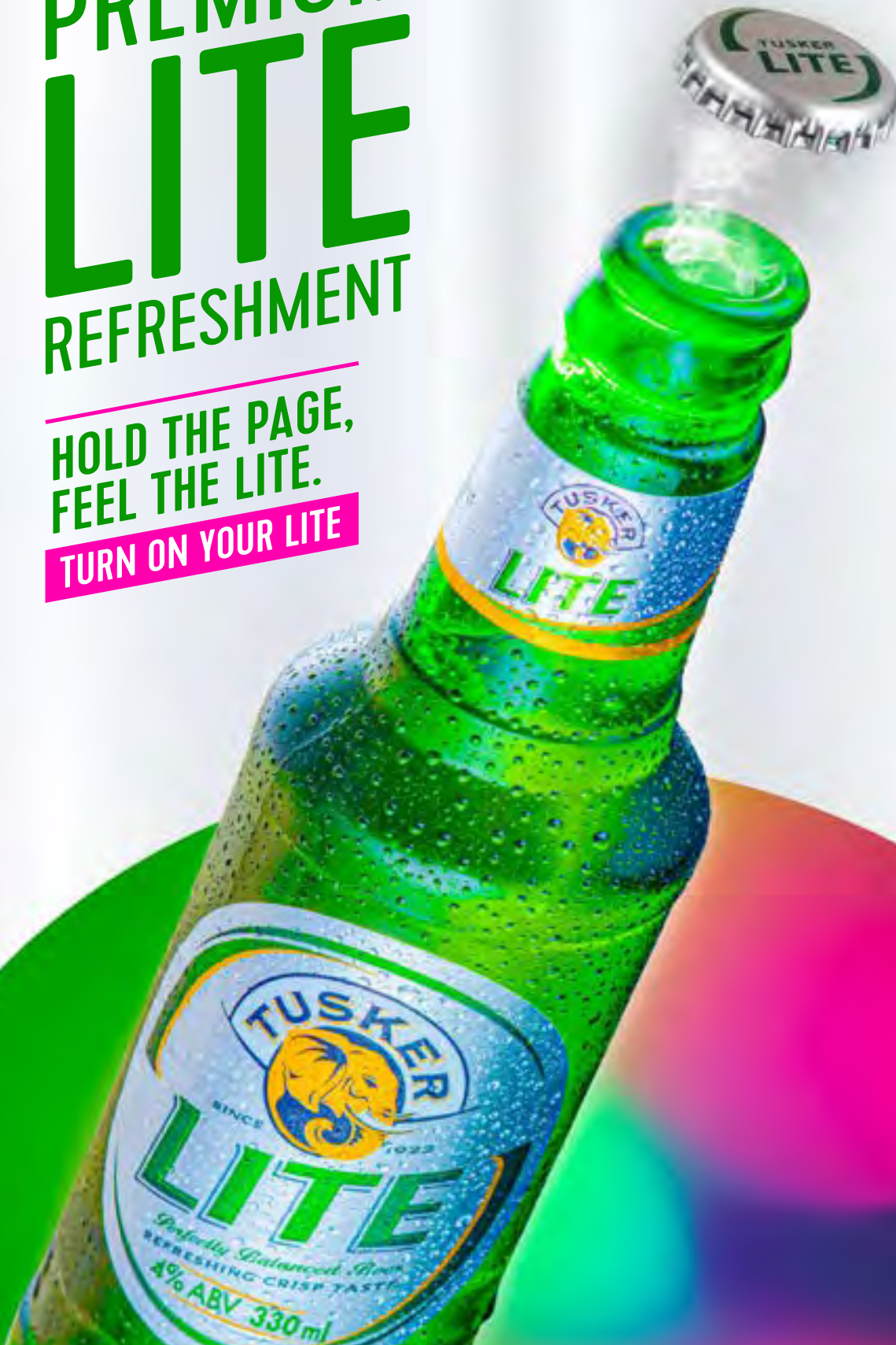
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FROM US, *Thank You All*



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This marathon is the work of many hands, many hearts, and an entire community moving in one direction. To all runners and participants – from elite athletes to first-timers – thank you for choosing to be part of Gulu's story. Your footsteps give this event its purpose.

We extend our gratitude to running clubs, government authorities, security agencies, and the communities that opened their roads and homes – thank you for making Gulu a safe, welcoming stage.

Special thanks to the Rwot and the Acholi cultural community for anchoring this marathon in heritage and identity.

To our partners and sponsors – thank you for your trust and belief in what GCM stands for.

And finally, to the organising committee – the team that sacrificed months of sleep and free days – thank you. This marathon thrives because all of you show up.

Apwoyo matek!





Running for Culture and Heritage

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