

Nairobi, Kenya, December 5 (Infosplusgabon) - ¶ Holders Uganda Cranes kicked off their title defence campaign on a shaky note after picking up a barren draw against Burundi at the Bukhungu Stadium in Kakamega, Western Kenya, on Monday afternoon.

In a game that had scoring chances sparring and far in between, Burundi coach Olivier Niyungeko left the happier of the two, saying if they could pick a point against a strong Uganda, they have what it takes to go all the way to the final.

“Uganda has always been a tough opposition and they always beat us. Today, we came with a good strategy and picked one point which is good for us. It is a good start and this will inspire more confidence for us,” Niyungeko told CAFOnline.com after the match.

His opposite number, Moses Basena, who is using the tournament to prepare for next year’s Total African Nations Championship (CHAN) was disappointed with the result but praised his boys for showing positive attitude.

“Kudos to Burundi! They defended very well and we couldn’t break them. I am disappointed in the result but not how my boys played. Remember in 2015 when we won, we lost the first match against Kenya so this is not a discouragement,” Basena said.

The game had to wait until the 24th minute for the first chance of the tie, but it was way from being dangerous. Ugandan Milton Kalisa floated in a freekick from the left which Derrick Nsibambi rose to connect to but he directed it over the bar.

On the opposite end, Shabaan Hussein's shot from a Razak Fiston through pass was blocked by Bernard Muwanga while skipper Pierre Kwizera's follow up shot was way wide on the half hour mark.

Uganda thought they had broken the deadlock in the 36th minute when Timothy Awany rose at the back post to connect to a Kalisa freekick into the net, but referee Peter Waweru whistled for a foul inside the box.

Burundi had a great chance just after the break when Fiston who turns out for South African side, Mamelodi Sundowns, was sent through, but his shot went wide. A minute later, Laudit Mavugo floated in a decent cross from the right but Fiston's attempt at a shot ended awry.

On the other end, Uganda also tried to show they were in for business with Muzamiru Mutyaba striking a wonderful shot from the edge of the box but the Burundian keeper reacted with an equally fine save.

Uganda head coach Moses Basena then made changes, Katterega and Tadeo Lwanga going off for Hood Kaweesa and Nelson Ssekantuka.

But despite the attacking changes, Burundi defended diligently to ensure they picked up at least one point from the game. They could have picked up victory in the final minutes when Tresor Ndikumana connected a Kwizera corner inside the box, but Cranes right back Nico Wadada cleared off the line.

Burundi will next play Ethiopia on Thursday while Uganda will be up against South Sudan Friday.

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