

## H.S. Baseball Player Dennis Kasumba Could Be 1st Ugandan Ever Selected in MLB Draft



Miguel Costa  
VladTV Staff Writer

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Last month, a Ugandan-born high school student named Dennis Kasumba made his debut on an American baseball diamond with the Fredrick Keys of the MLB Draft League. For the 19-year-old, this was a full-circle moment that began five years ago while working at a slaughterhouse when he was discovered by Paul Wafula, a youth baseball coach (from Gayaza) and a former member of Uganda's National Baseball team.



"I asked him why he was working in the slaughterhouse, and he was like, 'I want to have something to eat. We don't have anything to eat at home,'" recalled Wafula.



Their emotional introduction led to an unbreakable friendship and a proposition that would forever change the course of Kasumba's life: Wafula agreed to feed him, but in return, he had to re-enroll in junior high school and show up to the baseball field every day to participate in his team's on-field activities. The deal manifested in ways the pair may never have imagined as Kasumba became a promising baseball prospect out of the catcher position, known for hitting and his defensive prowess. In the following years, the teenager became a viral sensation for his unorthodox methods of practicing, such as hitting a baseball from a make-do tee, [catching car tires to improve his technique as a catcher](#) and [throwing bricks in the rain with his catcher's gear on](#). Furthermore, after appearing as an interviewee on *Flippin' Bats with Ben Verlander*, Kasumba has become somewhat of a media darling this Summer, appearing on NBC, FS1, and ESPN.

Eventually, Kasumba's story sparked a fan-led online campaign to assist his quest to travel to the United States and pursue his dream of becoming a professional baseball player. This resulted in a stint with the Fredrick Keys (a minor league baseball team), where he played eight games as the team's catcher and designated hitter. Growing up in Uganda, Kasumba rarely faced pitchers who threw faster than 90 MPH, so hitting a baseball in America will be an adjustment that may take an entire season in the MLB's farm system to figure out. Nevertheless, during his stint with the Frederick Keys, Kasumba impressed his teammates with his work ethic and ability to throw out base runners with his powerful arm strength.

With the MLB Draft coming up, the heartwarming story of Dennis Kasumba has garnered support from millions of fans worldwide. If the young catcher is drafted, he will become the first Ugandan to achieve such a feat, bringing him one step closer to following in the footsteps of his favorite baseball players, Salvador Pérez and Yadier Molina—MLB catchers who are former All-Stars that have each won World Series Championships. Unlike the NFL and the NBA, Major League Baseball's draft has 20 rounds where over 600 players are selected yearly. The 2023 MLB Draft will begin on July 9th and conclude on July 11th.