

Aga Khan Academy Alumnus Representing Uganda in Rio Olympic Games

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Joshua Tibatemwa Ekirikubinza, a graduate of The Aga Khan Academy Mombasa, earned a major thrill last week when he led team Uganda as the nation's flag bearer at the opening ceremony of the 31st summer Olympic games in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil

Wearing a bright red blazer decorated with boldly striped lapels and black trouser, Joshua walked into the Maracana stadium on Friday night, amid cheers and excitement, full of pride and with a big grin on his face, leading a team of 21 athletes and 18 officials.

Joshua started swimming at the age of six and 13 years later, he is set to make his Olympic debut in the 50 metres freestyle heats representing his country on August 11. He is among 10,500 athletes from 207 national teams that will compete in 306 events across 42 sports.

Joshua is ranked the overall fastest male swimmer in Uganda, having set two national records at last year's World Championships in Kazan, Russia. The 19-year-old achieved a personal best of 25.54 seconds in the 50 metres freestyle and a flat 33 seconds in the 50 metres breaststroke. This earned him a place in the country's Olympic swim team as announced by the Ugandan Swimming Federation.

“It has been a silent goal of mine to get to the Olympics. Every swimmer harbours it. I would love to have the opportunity to be among the world’s best athletes, doing what they’ve been training to do for many years,” said Joshua in a previous interview with the Grinnell College (Iowa, USA) news team, where he is currently a first year student-athlete.

A graduate from the Aga Khan Academy Mombasa, Joshua is the 10th flag bearer to have represented Uganda at the Olympics since 1960 and the second swimmer after Ganzi Mugula, who carried the Ugandan tri-coloured flag at the 2012 London Olympics.

Joshua joined the Academy in August 2013 from Aga Khan High School in Kampala, already representing Uganda in international swimming competitions. He graduated from the Academy with a prestigious International Baccalaureate Diploma, and went on to win a place at Grinnell, as his university of choice.

The Aga Khan Academy aims to identify, nurture and retain students with exceptional academic ability, who display leadership potential and who are committed to bringing positive change to their communities.

“What struck us about Joshua was that he had been a primary class counselor/prefect and was also the high school assistant general secretary for the student council in his former schools” ,” said Mr. Paul Davis, Dean of Admissions at The Aga Khan Academy Mombasa.

The school was also very impressed with the reputation he had built with his excellent articulation, maturity, discipline and dedicated approach towards all aspects of his studies. Joshua continued to display his leadership potential when he was elected to become the President of the Student Council and was selected by his peers to give the speech on behalf of the Class of 2015 during graduation ceremony in May, 2015.

He joins a widening group of former Aga Khan Academy Mombasa, pupils to have represented their countries in major international events, including Sabrina Kassam, who represented Tanzania at the Nanjing 2nd Youth Olympics in 2014 (swimming), Anham Salyani who was selected to represent Kenya in the 2010 Commonwealth Games (Swimming), and Hanifa Said, who represented Kenya at the 2014 Commonwealth Games in the triathlon event.

The Aga Khan Academy Mombasa provides education to talented students from all sections of society with the aim of generating future leaders for the region.

Many students, like Joshua, are admitted to respected universities in UK, Canada, USA and throughout the world, often gaining scholarships that reflect their leadership capacities.