

Hall of Fame · Rank 08 of 20

Joseph Okumu

Real Monarchs · USL Championship · Defender



Portrait: Wikipedia — Joseph Okumu

AI score	Career appearances	Career goals	Kenya caps
58/80	166	4	20

Highest transfer fee

\$11.0m / KSh 1.55bn (July 2023). Transfer fee, KAA Gent to Reims — €10m, reported in the Kenyan press as high as €12m, at \$1.10 to the euro and KSh 141 to the dollar.

Profile

Kenya and South Africa

A centre-back who started at Chemelil Sugar in the Kenyan league and went to Free State Stars in South Africa.

The American route

He took the college and USL route through AFC Ann Arbor and Real Monarchs before Europe would look.

Sweden, Belgium, France

IF Elfsborg brought him to Sweden in 2019 for 34 league appearances; KAA Gent paid a reported €3.5m in 2021 and he gave them 55 league games and a Belgian Cup in 2021-22; Reims signed him for Ligue 1 in July 2023, where he has added 43 league appearances and two goals. Six countries, four divisions, no elite academy: 166 senior appearances so far.

Kenya

He has 20 caps since his debut in 2016, including the 2019 Africa Cup of Nations.

Cup and continental record

The Belgian Cup with KAA Gent in 2021-22, with UEFA Europa Conference League football in the same period, and Coupe de France campaigns with Reims since. For Kenya he played at the 2019 Africa Cup of Nations.

Managers he played under

Jimmy Thelin, later of Aberdeen, managed him at IF Elfsborg; Hein Vanhaezebrouck signed him for KAA Gent and won the Belgian Cup with him; Will Still and then Luka Elsner managed him at Reims.

Firsts and milestones

— He won the Belgian Cup with KAA Gent in 2022 and played European group and knockout football with them, and he is the highest-valued Kenyan on Transfermarkt.

Did you know

Chemelil Sugar to Ligue 1, without a single season in a major academy

Okumu's route runs Chemelil Sugar and Free State Stars, then AFC Ann Arbor and Real Monarchs in the American lower divisions, then IF Elfsborg in Sweden, then KAA Gent in Belgium, and then Stade de Reims in France's Ligue 1 in July 2023. Six countries, four divisions, no shortcut and no academy — the exact pathway this plan is trying to make ordinary rather than exceptional.

6 Countries on the way up · 2023 Signed by Reims in Ligue 1 · 0 Seasons in an elite academy
Source: Career record, Transfermarkt — <https://www.transfermarkt.com/joseph-okumu/profil/spieler/453376>

Did you know

Rejected in South Africa, out of the game for a year, then the most expensive Kenyan ever

Chemelil Sugar to Free State Stars, and then nothing: a year out of professional football before he took the American route through AFC Ann Arbor in the fourth tier, where he was named TopDrawer Soccer's player of the year. Real Monarchs sold him to IF Elfsborg in 2019 for a record USL Championship fee, Gent paid a reported €3.5m in 2021, and Reims signed him in July 2023 in a deal reported at €12m — the highest figure ever attached to a Kenyan footballer.

1 year Out of the game after South Africa · €3.5m Gent's fee in 2021 · €12m The Reims deal, a Kenyan record

Source: Okumu's rise from rejection to Ligue 1 — Pulse Sports —

<https://www.pulsesports.co.ke/story/joseph-okumus-meteoric-rise-from-rejection-in-south-africa-one-year-sabbatical-to-frances-ligue-1-2023072308120981479>

Did you know

Clocked at 36 km/h in the Belgian league

The measurement that changed how European clubs read him was speed: 36 km/h recorded during his time in Belgium, quick enough to defend the space most Ligue 1 sides play into. It is also the argument for data on this site — nobody in Kenya was measuring any of it when he was young, and a defender who could not be timed could not be sold.

36 km/h Top speed recorded in Belgium · 2028 His contract at Reims runs to · 6 Countries in his professional record

Source: The metrics behind the most expensive Kenyan player — Pulse Sports — <https://www.pulsesports.co.ke/story/joseph-okumu-the-metrics-that-show-why-the-harambee-stars-and-reims-defender-is-the-most-expensive-kenyan-player-2025021717374431959>

Career record

Centre-back at Stade Reims in Ligue 2, under contract to June 2028, after Real Monarchs, IF Elfsborg, KAA Gent and Reims. A Kenya international since 2016 and the highest-valued Kenyan player on Transfermarkt at EUR 3m.

Career appearances and goals reconciled against Wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Okumu)