



BENNI DISCUSSES IMPORTANCE OF TRUSTED TECHNICAL TEAMS



TSO & MOLOI: KHOZA THE KEY TO UNLOCK MBULE BRILLIANCE



PIRATES RECEIVED TWO OFFERS FOR MOFOKENG BUT...



BOTH CAPE TOWN TEAMS CONSIDERING STATUS BUYS



THE MAN WHO'S DONE THE UNTHINKABLE IN ESWATINI



VAN WYK REVEALS BANYANA WAFCON CONCERN

THE DRAWING BOARD WITH MORITZ KOSSMANN & ACE OF THE WEEK

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CITY DEAL FOR HUMAN FALLS THROUGH AFTER RELEGATION?

Cape Town City’s planned signing of Rowan Human on a free transfer appears to have collapsed in the wake of their relegation to the Motsepe Foundation Championship. City had agreed personal terms with Human for the 2025/26 season after the talented midfielder left AmaZulu unexpectedly, following the expiry of his contract. With no extension agreed at AmaZulu, Human quickly became a target for several PSL clubs, but City moved swiftly to meet his terms and secured a deal in principle. However, the club’s drop to the second tier has thrown the move into serious doubt, leaving the deal all but off the table for now. Relegation has also cast uncertainty over the futures of several other players at City, as the club faces the challenge of reshaping its squad for life in the lower division



BUT... CITY LOOKING TO HIJACK SUPERSPORT STATUS?

Cape Town City are reportedly weighing up a bold move to acquire the top-flight status of SuperSport United, as other proposed deals for Matsatsantsa’s franchise appear to have stalled. While discussions remain in the early stages — and with City’s relegation heartbreak still painfully fresh this week — insiders suggest that club owner John Comitis is carefully assessing his options. Sources have confirmed that purchasing SuperSport’s or another willing top flight club’s status is indeed one of the scenarios the Citizens may actively explore to secure an immediate return to the Betway Premiership. Meanwhile, across town Cape Town Spurs, who were relegated from the second tier, are also being linked to a potential status buy, with rumours suggesting they’re eyeing a deal for another Motsepe Foundation Championship franchise after their relegation.



MORALO SET FOR SURPRISE EXIT?

SuperSport United midfielder Gape Moralo could be in line for a surprise exit from the club, whose future is increasingly uncertain. SuperSport had been linked with a status sale for the revival of Bloemfontein Celtic, and several players have already left upon the expiry of their contracts, including key figures Ime Okon and Bradley Grobler. Moralo still has one year remaining, but sources have indicated that he’s seeking an exit for a new challenge, having seen the likes of Thalete Mbatha thrive after life at the club, despite having peripheral roles in the senior set-up.



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WORLD CUP

ROUND OF 16

INTER
FLUMINENSE

MAN CITY
AL-HILAL

ROUND OF 16

PALMEIRAS
BOTAFOGO

BENFICA
CHELSEA

QUARTER-FINALS

PALMEIRAS
CHELSEA

FINAL

SEMIFINALS

SEMIFINALS

ROUND OF 16

PSG
INTER MIAMI

PSG
BAYERN

ROUND OF 16

REAL MADRID
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MOFOKENG INDIFFERENT OVER APPROACHES FROM ISRAELI GIANTS

Orlando Pirates and Bafana Bafana sensation Relebohile Mofokeng is currently in a transfer tug of war between Israeli Premier League giants Maccabi Haifa and Maccabi Tel Aviv, but has shown reluctance to make the move at this point in his career.

Sources close to the deal in Israel have confirmed both clubs have tabled offers to Orlando Pirates, who set a €1.8-million price tag on the 20-year-old talent who has starred from club and country over the past season.

With 12 goals and 15 assists to his name in 49 appearances across all competitions, the School of Excellence product was the standout player for Pirates as they finished second in the league, reached the semi-finals of the CAF Champions League, Nedbank Cup final and won the MTN8 in the 2024/25 season.

His performances attracted widespread interest from France, Belgium, the Netherlands and now Israel, but Haifa and Tel Aviv have been the first to make official approaches to Pirates, identifying him as a supreme talent who could develop and quickly be snapped up within the bigger leagues in Europe for a substantial profit.

Tel Aviv won their 26th league title last season and are in the second qualifying round for the UEFA Champions League, while Haifa are in the UEFA Conference League second qualifying round - with both in the market for a player of his profile.

While Haifa were the first to make contact with an initial opening bid of €1.2-million (R25-million) excluding add-ons, this was quickly rebuffed by Pirates with the club sticking to its original asking price.

Tel Aviv after days of talks were ready to stump up the offer to €1.4-million with



add-ons closer to the asking price, and while Pirates were reluctant, the potential sell on clauses with the window of interest for Mofokeng to play in UEFA competitions appeared appealing, as the only two clubs, thus far with genuine offers tabled.

However, sources confirmed Mofokeng is holding out for offers from more prominent leagues like Portugal, France, and Belgium at this point in his career and would prefer to remain at the Buccaneers, should this window not bring such opportunities.

With the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations on the horizon in January in Morocco and potentially the 2026 FIFA World Cup at the end of the season, the promising talent believes staying at Pirates for another season and looking to impress at the international level could be more beneficial for his career.

It's now a waiting game for the Israeli sides, who will now be aiming to convince Mofokeng about their project, which may be a hard task given the current political climate - but the doors are not completely closed as yet, with clear examples of players of young talent earning lucrative moves in Europe, after a season or two within the league.

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JUNIOR & TSO ON PIRATES' OUADDOU APPOINTMENT

Abdeslam Ouaddou's appointment as the new Orlando Pirates coach took many by surprise. How will the Moroccan do as the successor of Jose Riveiro?

Don't forget to catch match reaction moments after the final whistle, and more from Junior Khanye, Tso Vilakazi, Machaka, Lindo Pep, Nkululeko Nkewu and others on iDiskiTV.

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'I'm Not Sure About This Appointment'



Junior Khanye: "I think Orlando Pirates wanted a coach they could control and influence. Maybe that's why their talks with Rulani Mokwena ended.

"Pirates are full of surprises, and they operate in a way that includes influencing the coach.

"I am not sold on this coach. He doesn't have a track record.

"He has just arrived in South Africa, and he hasn't won anything to coach a team of Pirates calibre.

"Anyways, I don't think the next season will be a success if this coach changes things. Pirates had a lot of momentum and did well last season.

"This guy will want to implement his own thing there, and it will slow down the momentum."

Tso Vilakazi: "I'm not sure about this appointment.

"Abdeslam Ouaddou defeated both Orlando Pirates and Kaizer Chiefs last season. Perhaps that's what persuaded Pirates to hire him?

"He did a decent job at Marumo Gallants and steered them away from relegation. Can we expect him to win the league? I'm not so sure about that.

"Can he win the Champions League? I doubt it. I thought Pirates would take a Rulani Mokwena or Pitso Mosimane in order to challenge Mamelodi Sundowns for the league, but they have opted for Abdeslam Ouaddou, and I wish him all the best."

‘PIRATES IS THE RIGHT CLUB FOR SIPHO MBULE’

By Matshelane Mamabolo

TWO ORLANDO PIRATES legends are in agreement: Sipho Mbule has joined the right club, and his immense talent is going to flourish in the famous black and white jersey.

Mbule is the marquee signing among eight new players the Buccaneers have announced in the past week, the midfielder joining after being released by Mamelodi Sundowns. He was at Sekhukhune United on loan in the previous campaign, having started

his professional career at SuperSport United.

While his talent is unquestionable, Mbule’s off-the-field shenanigans have served to disrupt his progress, leaving many to suggest the move to Pirates is his last chance saloon. There are even those who believe the Buccaneers are going to end up with egg all over their faces as the 27-year-old will get up to his mischievous ways.

Teboho Moloi and Benedict ‘Tso’ Vilakazi beg to differ and are excitedly looking forward to seeing the player nicknamed ‘Masterchef’ cooking for their former club.

The two, themselves naughty boys during their playing days, say Mbule is going to find ‘guidance and support’ from Chairman Irvin Khoza that will see him performing to the best of his abilities.

“There’s nothing new with Pirates signing a player deemed as troublesome. We were problems ourselves,” Moloi tells me. “But the chairman has always proven to be a father before he can put on his chairman hat. Starting with the likes of myself and then Jabu [Pule], Cheese [Lebohang Mokoena] and Gift [Leremi], the chairman handled us, and we all produced our best. I am not even concerned about the off-the-field antics that Sipho Mbule is said to have. He has joined a club where he will be reined in, and I am truly excited that he found a home where he belongs.”

Moloi highlighted the fact that Khoza has dealt with a lot of young black boys and knows the challenges that come with it.

“He has seen it all and knows how to bridge the gap when the father is not there, and he tries to show you that if you want to achieve big things, this is the way to go. You know the Chairman loves to tell the stories of my dad [the late Chippa Moloi], Bra K [Kaizer Motaung Sr] and Jomo [Sono] – great legends of Pirates. He’s always shared how those guys used to work very hard and do their own extra training, and he uses that to show you that success comes from hard work. I’m sure he will share that with Sipho as well.”

VILAKAZI: “I HOPE THAT DR IRVIN KHOZA IS NOT TOO OLD NOW TO BE ABLE TO SIT HIM DOWN AND GUIDE HIM LIKE HE DID WITH ME. WHEN I WAS GOING OFF THE RAILS, THE CHAIRMAN TOOK ME BY THE HAND AS HIS SON AND GUIDED ME.”



MOLOI: “HE’S GOT THE ARROGANCE NEEDED OF A PIRATES PLAYER. HE’S STREET SAVVY AND HAS A GREAT FOOTBALL BRAIN.”



VILAKAZI: “MOST OF US PLAYERS GROW UP IN VERY DISADVANTAGED FAMILIES – SOME HAVE NO PARENTS, OTHERS JUST STRUGGLE FOR BASIC FOOD. AND THEN SUDDENLY YOU ARE IN THIS NEW LIFE OF SUPERSTARDOM.”

Vilakazi adds: “I hope that Dr Irvin Khoza is not too old now to be able to sit him down and guide him like he did with me. When I was going off the rails, the chairman took me by the hand as his son and guided me, and I still appreciate that because today I am a father and all those things that he taught me I am applying to my kids. My hope is that Sipho will get to sit with the chairman and listen to him and take his words of advice because some of us are better people today because of what the chairman did for us.”

Moloi gave the example of Jabu Pule, who Pirates signed in spite of his notoriety for ill-discipline, as a sign that Khoza knows how to guide young players.

“Look at Jabu, he came to Pirates when no one would touch him really, and what happened, the chairman even helped him find himself and his Mahlangu ancestors. Sipho is in good hands.”

I asked the two legends questions regarding Mbule?

What is your view of Sipho Mbule as a player? How do you rate him?

Tso Vilakazi: I like this boy. I saw him when he was still at the SuperSport development, and he showed great potential even then. So, I was not surprised when he came to the PSL. I

love him with all my heart, his play is totally different. He is very intelligent. He does not have speed, but he is so intelligent, he makes up for it with his quick mind. I’ve not seen many players who can do the things that he does with the ball; he can pass, he can score, he reads the game incredibly well.

Teboho Moloi: I am excited about this signing. Sipho is brave and he is bold. I like that he is a team player, he enjoys playing with others, and my hope is that he will combine well with the likes of Rele [Mofokeng], Mohau [Nkota], [Kabelo] Dlamini and [Thalente] Mbatha. They just need to sit down and establish each other’s strengths so that they can combine well within the coach’s playing system. With him at Pirates, I dream of seeing us having a midfield combination like the one Pep [Guardiola] had at Barcelona with Messi, Xavi, Iniesta and Busquets.

Besides the off-the-field distractions that everyone knows about, why do you think he has not lived up to his potential?

Tso Vilakazi: South African football needs to learn that most of us players grow up in very disadvantaged families – some have no parents, others just struggle for basic food. And then suddenly you are in this new life of superstardom. There needs to be proper guidance for this big transition. Our clubs must invest in psychologists to help the players deal with the pressures that come with being in the limelight. There’s no doubt about the talent of South African players, but what is often lacking is the ability to handle the fame that comes with it. Our players need to be made aware that, unfortunately, once you are in the limelight, everything that you do is under scrutiny. So, unlike a doctor or a lawyer, you cannot be drinking in public because then you get plastered all over social media, and it affects your career. That’s just the sad reality of it, because we suddenly become role models and everything we do is under the microscope. A player from ekasi needs to be taught those things, but unfortunately, our clubs don’t do that and instead discard these boys when they make mistakes.

Teboho Moloi: The Chairman always says, ‘Once you join Pirates, your life and lifestyle changes.’ Playing for Pirates, each and every day, you are under the spotlight. Not taking anything away from Sundowns, but it is only Pirates who filled the stadium every time they played, and that’s the kind of stage Sipho enjoys. He is born for the big stage. I believe he needs something that will constantly tell him that ‘if I do this off the field, I am going to miss out on the stage’ and I don’t think he is going to want to miss out on performing on the big stage that is the Orlando Pirates matches. So, we are going to see the best of Sipho now that he’s at Pirates.





Why is he a great signing for Pirates?

Tso Vilakazi: Look, Pirates need a player like Siphon who can create something out of nothing. Siphon reminds me of Teboho Moloi, who was not fast but was a quick thinker on the ball. I grew up watching Teboho, and he was also my coach and every time I've watched Siphon, I've seen those similarities. And we all know what Teboho did for Pirates as a player. As long as Siphon heeds the chairman's advice, he's going to sizzle at Pirates. We are going to see the fulfilment of that potential some of us spotted when he was still in the SuperSport development. And I don't agree that this is his last chance saloon. I think if he can just focus on the field, he can even still go overseas – that's just how high a quality player he is. I have no doubt about that.

Teboho Moloi: He has our style. He is an arrogant player on the field, and he comes across as someone who would boldly tell an opponent that, 'You're going to chase my shadow all day,' and that's what makes a Pirates player. He's going to help lift the game of the other players in the team, and we are going to see Pirates playing at an even higher level due to his presence. And he himself is going to become a big player because Pirates do that for you. Just look at what the likes of [Thembinkosi] Lorch and Miguel Timm became when they joined the club. Siphon is going to become a huge star; the coach just needs to use him and the rest of the other players well because he has the best squad at his disposal.

Will he make as big an impact at Pirates as most people seem to believe he will?

Tso Vilakazi: Of course, he will make a huge impact. That's the one element Pirates were lacking: someone in the midfield who can think for the entire team. I felt that we relied too much on the attackers, but we had no one in midfield who can be the link, a ball fetcher and carrier, and Siphon is going to be this.



MOLOI: "THERE'S NOTHING NEW WITH PIRATES SIGNING A PLAYER DEEMED AS TROUBLESOME. WE WERE PROBLEMS OURSELVES."

Teboho Moloi: Definitely. As I said, he's got the arrogance needed of a Pirates player. He's street savvy and has a great football brain – he can do his own thing within the system and the key is the coach must allow him to put his individual brilliance to use. What I love about him is that he allows his teammates to shine. I used to see how he'd give Teboho Mokoena passes for him to score those great goals, and he did not seem to be envious of the attention Teboho received. He reminds me of my former teammates Bazooka [Nick Seshweni] and Botsotso [Ernest Makhanya], who did not mind that all the glory came to me and Bashin [Mahlangu]. Even though he's from the Free State, Siphon has the attributes of a boy from ekasi Soweto who played 'challance' – street football. He's going to be a big hit at Pirates.

EYETHU SONKE

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CHAMPIONS HUNTED: CAN BANYANA RISE TWICE?

By Lethabo Kganyago

The 2025, well, technically the 2024 CAF Women's Africa Cup of Nations (WAFCON) tournament will finally get underway in Morocco on Saturday, 5 July, with the hosts and finalists from the last edition, Morocco, taking on bronze medalists from the last event, Zambia, in Rabat. The biggest women's spectacle on the continent was initially scheduled for 2024 but was postponed to 2025, as the tournament clashed with the Paris Olympics Games. The 2022 edition has been hailed as a turning point for women's football on the continent, according to the head of Women's football at CAF, Meskerem Goshime quoted in a recent interview with cafonline.com. Goshime noted competitiveness, stadium attendance and media interest among some of the wins registered by the continental mother body from 2022. Goshime also spoke about how the improvements on the continent are bearing fruit internationally, with a lot of African players signing for major clubs abroad at a fast momentum.

"It's the result of several years of work. This boom is driven by better scouting networks, increased media visibility, and gradual professionalisation of our national teams and leagues. Our players have always had talent. Now, the world is watching. These

recent transfers perfectly reflect that evolution. Pioneers like Asisat Oshoala paved the way, and now the younger ones are proving that you can rise from local beginnings to the elite," Goshime says.

Goshime also believes that the attraction of international coaches to the African national women's teams brings something dynamic while also providing an opportunity for African coaches to elevate their game. Women's Technical study guru Fran Hilton-Smith shares the sentiments looking ahead of the tournament.

"The growth of women's football in specifically the countries that are participating in the upcoming WAFCON, the standard is definitely improved," Hilton-Smith tells iDiski Times.

"And I think a great deal of that has been put down to that a lot of the countries have PSL clubs who are now having teams, and this is benefiting them. Also, the number of players that are playing overseas has improved the standard. And those players, when they come back, for instance, in Mali, you have [Agueissa] Diarra, who's their key player, playing at PSG in France. When she comes back, she brings that experience, and it filters down to the





other players. So I think definitely the standard, the technical, tactical playing at this WAFCON is going to be of a much higher quality.”

“I think other countries are determined to do better this time. I think Nigeria is one of the countries who’ve won the tournament forever is out to prove that they deserve to be winners. I think another country that was always in the top group, Ghana, has made a comeback, and have been missing from the tournament. They’ve also now got a coach from Sweden, Kim [Lars Björkegren], and he’s determined to do well. I think all the countries, nobody can be discounted.”

Hilton-Smith has served in technical study groups at COSAFA and CAF tournaments and also spoke about the teams from the South and their technical preparedness for the tournament. In 2022, South Africa finished first, Zambia third after grounding the Falcons, while Botswana, who were debutants, managed to go to the knockout stage. South Africa and Zambia also booked tickets to the 2023 FIFA Women’s World Cup in New Zealand and Australia, where they enjoyed impressive runs. She believes the teams from the Southern region have the pedigree to finish in the top four this year.

“I think the teams are pretty well prepared technically for the tournament,” Smith added confidently.

“I think the matches that we’ve watched them play recently, especially here in the tournament in South Africa, we saw that technically, the teams are competent and prepared for the tough task ahead of playing in the WAFCON against some very strong teams from the north, and also from, the likes of Ghana and Nigeria as well. If you look at Ghana, they have now a Swedish coach, as do Zambia.

“In football, I always believe the ball is round and anything can happen, and I think those three countries from the South have a good chance of finishing up in the top group. I think Zambia, with the calibre of players that they have, the Barbara Bandas, etc, certainly are geared to finish in the top three or four.”

Bringing matters closer to home, Banyana are in Group C and open their account against the Black Queens on 7 July in Oujda, followed by the encounter against Tanzania on 11 July and close the group stage with a match against Mali on 13 July. Naturally, the core of the team is experienced, with some also senior in age, while there have been retirements since lifting the trophy. All-time capped African player Janine Van Wyk bowed out of the game, Noko Matlou retired from international football, Jermaine Seoposenwe has announced she will step off the international scene



MESKEREM GOSHIME : “THIS BOOM IS DRIVEN BY BETTER SCOUTING NETWORKS, INCREASED MEDIA VISIBILITY, AND GRADUAL PROFESSIONALISATION OF OUR NATIONAL TEAMS AND LEAGUES.”

after the 2025 edition, while prolific striker Thembi Kgatlana, asked not to be considered for selection due to personal reasons. Hilton-Smith says from her observation, the players that have been entrusted to fill the roles have stepped up.

“We’ve got the core of players. Unfortunately, some of the players who were key in the previous ones, like Janine, who has retired, Noko is retired from playing in the national team. Unfortunately, Thembi is now not available. I think the players who are coming in now have been with the team. They’ve played now this very crucial three-nation tournament, and they now have to step up and ensure that the team is at a high level for the tournament.”

Meanwhile, Van Wyk feels that coach Desiree Ellis has selected a good squad, players who have been raising their hands, especially in the domestic league. However, the former WAFCON winner says her worry is the amount of time the players have spent together.

“So, there’s some players that were part of, of course, the 2022 AFCON squad, there’s obviously some new faces as well,” responded Van Wyk when asked for her opinion of the team by this publication.

“But all in all, I think it is a strong squad. You know, people always say, if you don’t have your Thembi Kgatlana, how are you going to score goals? But I think in recent matches against Botswana and Zambia, you saw that there had been multiple goal scorers, which is also a good plus for the national team.

“The only concern that I have is, they haven’t really had much time to prepare. They’ve just come into camp





and played two weeks or trained a week and played two matches, but they haven't really been together for a long period of time to build the chemistry amongst each other. So that would probably be my only concern, but they had time after this, the league stopped, leading up to the tournament, which should have given them around two weeks to be together. But that would be, really, my only concern that I would have with a team, because you know that the other national teams, like Morocco, have been in camp for a very long time."

Experience is definitely going to be key in Banyana defending their title, and they have also welcomed back players who had been injured for long periods and those who haven't been called up in a while. Co-captain Refiloe "Fifi" Jane, Bambanani Mbane, Karabo Dhlamini and Tiisetso Makhubela have returned to the team after long layoffs and made the trip up North. Van Wyk is confident the players can step up and provide leadership, though she's worried about the fitness of some of these players.

"I mean, they have to step up right now. I'm also very concerned with Fifi. She has been out with a long-term injury since the World Cup. She's only just returned, maybe for two months or so, that she's been actively playing. So I think there could have been like a loss of form in that sense, when you are talking about physically playing on the field. But I think as a character and as a leader, I mean, she would be definitely one to uplift the spirit in camp, which can always be to the advantage of her team. But as I mentioned, Desiree [Ellis] also has replacements for those areas anyway. So, yeah, it's about time that the other players step up. Your Bambanani as well also only recently returned from injury, which is also a concern. So I don't think that all players in the squad are 100% on form, as I would say, and have been playing long term, which is a major setback because not everyone is 100% fully fit, fully ready, and have been playing actively for long periods of time. And these are really crucial areas. But again, it's their characters that could make them rise to the occasion at the end of the day."

It is not an impossible task to defend the crown, as Nigeria has shown over the years; however, it will take some doing to win the title back-to-back. The JVW FC coach has been pleased with how Ellis has tried different combinations to get versatility in the team, though again, time spent on these formations is a worry. All three of Banyana's opponents in Group C were not at the last edition of the tournament. However, their squads boast players plying their trades in some of the top leagues abroad, and the former South African captain warns not to take anyone lightly.



JANINE VAN WYK: "PEOPLE ALWAYS SAY, IF YOU DON'T HAVE YOUR THEMBI KGATLANAS, HOW ARE YOU GOING TO SCORE GOALS? BUT I THINK IN RECENT MATCHES AGAINST BOTSWANA AND ZAMBIA, YOU SAW THAT THERE HAD BEEN MULTIPLE GOAL SCORERS."

"I think women's football in Africa has improved tremendously, there are leagues now in Africa, playing it's competitive," added Van Wyk.

"I definitely don't think it's going to be a walkover and we should look at these opponents lightly. Your first game is always setting the tone for the tournament ahead. And I think playing the likes of Ghana, they were once, before one of the powerhouses in African football, if not still. They are really difficult to overcome, and they haven't really done so well in the past major tournaments, but this is an opportunity for them to rise up again. They probably have some quality players, youngsters also, that's come through the ranks to fill their squad. Mali, as well, and Tanzania. Tanzania has never been an easy opponent to play. They literally come with full-on energy, and they are just ruthless in their tackles, and don't give you space and time to play. So if they're going to come up with such approaches, we have to be ready for that. I really don't think it will be an easy task to get out of the group, although on paper, we should easily do that. But I think it will be a really tough tournament this round."

What is clear is that a lot of national teams on the continent have improved and want to stake their claim with the target on South Africa. The pressure is on Banyana and perhaps by virtue that the team they dethroned has been able to do it many times. They'd also be hoping the football success euphoria in South Africa rubs off on them as well after the U17 men's team have qualified for the 2025 FIFA U17 World Cup and the U20 men's side winning the U20 AFCON last month and qualifying for the U20 FIFA World Cup.





BENNI DISCUSSES IMPORTANCE OF TRUSTED TECHNICAL TEAMS

By Rob Delpont

Something that has always left me perplexed – particularly within the context of South African football – is how frequently new head coaches accept positions at clubs while working with technical staff they didn't appoint themselves.

It was, for years, the norm that only an assistant coach might accompany a new head coach into a role, while the rest of the backroom staff – fitness trainers, analysts, goalkeeper coaches, and even second assistants – remained from the previous regime.

Although we're beginning to see a gradual shift toward entire technical teams arriving together, the practice is still far from universal. And it begs an important question: in a high-pressure, results-driven environment where the margins for error are razor-thin, how can a coach truly succeed without the foundation of trust and alignment throughout their own support staff?

At its core, football – like any leadership-driven discipline – is built on relationships. A head coach must have complete confidence that every member of their technical team not only understands their philosophy but is fully committed to executing it. Shared vision, mutual respect, and unquestioned loyalty are not luxuries – they are necessities. When assistants or support staff are inherited rather than selected, the head coach faces the added challenge of managing relationships that may lack that foundational trust or shared purpose.

In an era where data, preparation, and marginal gains can decide championships, even a subtle disconnect in the chain of communication or belief

can derail progress. The best teams, on and off the pitch, operate in harmony. Coaches must be able to speak freely, delegate confidently, and receive honest feedback from people they know are unequivocally in their corner.

Ultimately, building a technical team is not just about filling positions – it's about forging a collective force that functions as one. In a landscape where coaches are judged quickly and often harshly, being surrounded by individuals you trust with your reputation, your ideas, and your future isn't optional. It's everything.

Someone who has been unequivocal about the importance of trust and loyalty when assembling his technical team is Bafana Bafana legend and current Kenya national team head coach, Benni McCarthy.

Since his rise into management, McCarthy has made it a non-negotiable principle that he surrounds himself with a team of his choosing – individuals he not only rates for their technical acumen but trusts implicitly with the enormous responsibilities that come with elite-level football.

When he accepted the role as head coach of the Harambee Stars earlier this year, one of his key conditions was the freedom to appoint his own trusted lieutenants, including long-time allies Vasili Manousakis and Moeneeb Josephs.

If there's any South African whose phone's contacts reads like a who's who of global football, it's Benni. From top-tier coaches to legendary former players, he has no shortage of high-profile names he could call on to form a technical team. Yet, when it comes to choosing his core staff, there's



no hesitation – McCarthy remains unwaveringly loyal to the trusted individuals who have stood beside him.

Manousakis has been by McCarthy’s side from almost the very beginning of his coaching career, serving as his assistant during his maiden managerial stint at Cape Town City, and later reuniting with him at AmaZulu. The pair have built a strong working relationship, rooted in shared philosophy and mutual respect.

Josephs, meanwhile, is not just a former teammate from their Bafana Bafana and Orlando Pirates days, but someone McCarthy trusts implicitly and brought into the coaching space at AmaZulu as part of his inner circle – valuing his presence, insight, and player-to-coach relatability.

Speaking recently from his home in Scotland, on a break after he had just celebrated his first win with the Kenyan national team, McCarthy was quick to reiterate that technical knowledge alone isn’t enough in this business.

“Because those are the people you’re gonna be with every single day,” McCarthy told me as we discussed the strong bond he has with Manousakis and Josephs.

“So if you don’t trust them with your life, or you can’t trust them to have your back throughout, then what good is that?”

In a profession where results are demanded instantly and job security is often measured in months, not years, McCarthy’s insistence on working with a trusted technical team isn’t about ego – it’s about survival and success. For him, the margins that separate progress from failure often rest not in formations or substitutions, but in the unseen moments of collaboration, the instinctive understanding in high-pressure situations, and the confidence that every person beside you is fully aligned.

“IF YOU DON’T TRUST THEM WITH YOUR LIFE, OR YOU CAN’T TRUST THEM TO HAVE YOUR BACK THROUGHOUT, THEN WHAT GOOD IS THAT?”

“The pressures that come with football are way too high,” McCarthy continued.

“It’s so demanding. So if you work with people you can’t trust, and you have to deliver on a daily basis, first training and then matches – you have to deliver, and if you don’t deliver, you’re out of a job.

“But if you work with people you can’t trust, imagine the amount of stress, because you’ve got your guard up with your people that you work with, but you also have to work with them to trust them, or you have to then take input from them to help you to deliver results.

“And if you can’t do that because you don’t trust the people that you work with, oh God... and that’s why you see people just fired left, right and centre, because yeah, like me, I can’t work like that.

“I need to have good people around me, people that are humanitarians, people that have hearts, people that have families, people that have people that they love.”

The 47-year-old has experienced, in the most personal and painful way, what it means to have individuals within his technical team working against him. It’s a betrayal that cuts deeper than most in football – not just undermining tactics or preparation, but eroding the very foundation of trust essential to success. Reflecting on that chapter of his career, he admitted it’s something he wouldn’t wish on his worst enemy.

“Oh yeah, 100%, it’s the worst,” McCarthy explained.

“It’s the worst thing that you could ever experience, because football can be a lonely job when you’re a coach, when you’re a manager, and now you’ve got people that you’ve got to hide from as well?

“Because you can’t share your ideas, you can’t share your work, you can’t share your tactics, because they’ll use it against you to help to make you fail.

“You know, it was the worst, and I experienced that in my first experience in my coaching career, Cape Town City... oh my god.”

McCarthy’s experience at City, where he believed certain members of the technical staff had hidden agendas and actively worked against him, proved to be a defining moment in his managerial journey. It was a harsh lesson in the importance of alignment, loyalty, and trust – one that reshaped his entire approach to leadership. From that point on, he made it non-negotiable: he would only work with people he respected and trusted implicitly.

“I know it’s a competitive environment, but for some it’s survival,” he lamented.

“And they don’t think, ‘But yes, I have to survive, but this guy is the one that made me survive to begin with, so let me place my loyalty to him and let me give him everything that I’ve got, because he took me from the dead, basically.’

“But now they don’t think like that. They think, ‘Ah, he took me from the dead, now I’m in, and now I want his job. Let me stick him, because I’m in now and then, if he goes, maybe I’ll become head coach. I’ll become the main man,’ ai.”

And McCarthy has remained unwavering in his stance, even at the cost of career opportunities.

He has turned down roles – and even lost out on high-profile appointments – simply because he refused to compromise on assembling his own backroom team.

In one notable instance, a major job slipped through his fingers when a Sporting Director opted to appoint a coach he was more familiar with. Though disappointed, McCarthy respected the decision, recognising that mutual trust is a two-way street.

McCarthy has always been known for wearing his heart on his sleeve – his passion unmistakable, especially in the heat of battle on the touchline. We’ve seen those flashes of emotion countless times, but what’s perhaps most revealing is that his fiercest reactions are rarely in defence of himself. More often than not, McCarthy’s volatility is triggered when his players or staff are under fire. It’s a testament to his loyalty



“I’VE GOT A BULLETPROOF VEST ON, SO YOU CAN SHOOT AS MUCH AS YOU WANT. IT’S GOING TO HURT, BUT IT WON’T GET THROUGH.”

and protective nature – he’s quick to stand up for those around him, even if he remains composed when personally targeted.

“Of course, because I know my ability,” Benni explained.

“I know what I can do, so I know whatever I’m going through in life, I have my way of dealing with that, and I’m okay with that. But someone else might not be as fortunate as me. Somebody else might probably deal with emotions, or deal with stress, or deal with heartbreak completely differently.

“So when someone picks on them, that’s when I have a problem, because I know not everybody in life handles problems the same way as each other. And a certain criteria can shoot someone down and can finish somebody that doesn’t have the stomach to deal with that.

“So that’s why, when it comes to it – if you mess with my players, my people, then you mess with the lion, and yeah, and then I really go in.

“But if it’s me, then I’m okay. I’ve got a bulletproof vest on, so you can shoot as much as you want. It’s going to hurt, but it won’t get through.”

BRA SI'S ESWATINI MIRACLE

A MASTERCLASS IN COACHING, CULTURE, AND PURPOSE

By Matshelane Mamabolo

If ever there were a living example of coaching as both an art and a science, it is Simon ‘Bra Si’ Ngomane. For years, I’ve known this man to be one of the finest football minds South Africa has produced – a humble strategist with a gift for turning theory into transformation. I caught up with him during his brief return home from the Kingdom of Eswatini, where he had just completed what might be his most defining project yet: guiding the unheralded Nsingizini Hotspurs to their first-ever league title.

He didn’t arrive as a saviour with a whistle in hand. In fact, he started off in November as a Sporting Director, brought in to assess and align performance systems. But three months later, he was handed the reins. The club president, Derrick Shiba, impressed by his insight and commitment, asked Bra Si to step into the coaching role. He accepted, and the rest, as they say, is history.

What sets Ngomane apart is his coaching philosophy. He doesn’t just drill tactics – he cultivates human beings. At the heart of his approach is the “Positive Coaching Model,” a system designed to transform not only how players perform but how they think, live, and grow.

“The first thing I had to do,” he says in between sips of his coffee during our interview in Bryanston, Johannesburg, “was to eliminate fear. You can’t coach people who are afraid – afraid of making mistakes, afraid of failing.”

He emphasised honouring the game: respect for the traditions of football, for officials, teammates, and opponents. He then redefined winning.

“A winner,” he said, “is not just someone who lifts a trophy. A winner is someone who has mastered effort, learning, and mistakes – the ELM tree of mastery.”

His players were taught to assess themselves weekly, receive performance scores, and support one another emotionally.

“You can’t drive from Johannesburg to Cape Town on a half or quarter tank. You’ve got to make sure that your tank is always full. Players must enter the field with their emotional tanks full. They must be confident that they are going to deliver on the day. And to me, that was very, very much important. And I thought the boys responded well.”

This cultural reset, more than any tactical switch, was the fuel behind Hotspurs’ surge from seventh on the table to champions. And Bra Si achieved this without promising silverware – only progress, honesty, and process.



The Power of Partnership

Key to this transformation was the relationship between coach and president. The club’s leader, an engineer by training, appreciated Ngomane’s process-driven methodology.

“He’s a process person, and so am I,” Ngomane explained.

Their collaboration was a model of respectful engagement – something sorely lacking in much of South African football today.

Rather than the usual cries of interference, Bra Si welcomed input.

“If you’ve invested your money, you deserve to ask questions,” he said. “My job is to test that input against the system.”

In this model, club leadership isn’t a burden on coaching – it’s an asset.

Our conversation ventured into the heart of African football identity. Ngomane, a long-time collaborator with the late Ted Dumitru, remains a staunch believer in tailoring tactics to suit the genetic and cultural make-up of southern African players.

“Our players are built for speed, agility, and surprise,” he explained. “We don’t have the physicality of the north. That’s why it’s madness to keep importing European coaches who don’t understand who we are.”

He spoke with conviction about the ACTN3 gene, which research shows influences explosive power.

“It’s dominant in our region. Our game must be fast, unpredictable and full of flair. That’s what works for us.”

He lamented how South Africa, despite hosting the 2010 World Cup, has failed to capitalise on its momentum. “We were meant to leap forward. Instead, we stagnated.”

Institutional Memory and Forgotten Wisdom

His frustrations are not just with foreign coaches but with the erosion of institutional knowledge in local football. As a former Director of Coaching at SAFA, he played a pivotal role in shaping a generation of South African coaches – Pitso Mosimane, Steve Komphela, Manqoba Mngqithi, Roger De Sá, and many more.

But what about the hundreds of development coaches, the unsung heroes in dusty townships and rural villages?

“Those are the real stars,” he said. “They keep the game alive. We need to value them.”

He also criticized the lack of succession planning in national coaching structures.

“When Hugo Broos leaves, who takes over? We should have someone ready. But we don’t, because we haven’t institutionalized technical leadership.”

This absence of structure, he believes, is why decisions get reversed behind closed doors, why technical committees are filled with politicians instead of technicians, and why coaching appointments remain mired in secrecy and suspicion.

A Regional Vision for African Football

Though now based in Eswatini, Bra Si sees the bigger picture. He believes that southern African countries – Eswatini, Botswana, Lesotho, South Africa, Zimbabwe – possess the talent to dominate the continent. “The difference isn’t ability – it’s identity and investment. Once Eswatini discovers who they are and builds around it, they’ll be hard to stop.”

He dreams of a footballing renaissance powered by local knowledge, grounded in science, and enriched by the values of community and growth.

“Football is more than a sport. It’s a tool to shape character, build economies, and transform lives.”

For all his accolades, Bra Si remains deeply humble. When I asked if he had ambitions to coach at national team level or win continental trophies, he smiled and said: “If the project makes sense, if it’s about growth and purpose, I’ll consider it. But I’m not chasing titles. I’m chasing transformation.”

He views himself as a teacher first, using what he calls the “pedagogy of play.”

It’s not about winning at all costs – it’s about winning in life. Integrity, respect, and ethical performance are just as important as goals and points.

That’s why, even as Hotspurs prepare for their CAF Champions League debut under new coach Mandla Xoki, Bra Si is content to return to his role as sporting director.

“It’s time to build performance systems, to strengthen the club long-term.”



As our conversation wound down, we returned to South Africa, where Bra Si’s absence is both glaring and symbolic: “South Africa has many visionaries. But we also have too many people clinging to power, afraid to let go.”

He questioned changes to SAFA’s constitution that removed term limits, arguing that leadership must be accountable, transparent, and open to renewal. “Let the old horses step aside. There are brilliant young minds waiting to lead.”

He also pointed to football’s failure to honour those who gave so much.

“I’ve suffered,” he admitted. “My family has suffered; for loving the game. It shouldn’t be like this.”

Yet, remarkably, there is no bitterness. Only hope. Bra Si remains a servant of the sport, loyal to the project of African football.

“As long as I’m breathing, I’ll continue to share what I know – wherever it’s needed.”

The Legacy Lives On

Ngomane’s journey – teacher, coach, mentor, visionary – is a masterclass in servant leadership. He has mentored stars, developed philosophies, and turned a small Eswatini club into champions.

And he’s not done.

As we ended our interview, he turned to me and said: “To live like a king, you must work like a slave. Those boys understood that. And look where it got them.”

May we all understand that.

Bra Si’s story isn’t just about winning a league – it’s about reclaiming the soul of African football, one principle, one player, one process at a time.

*After his success, Ngomane has returned to his Sporting Director role ahead of the new campaign, and another South African, Mandla Qhogi, has been appointed coach.



THE 2024/25 BIG WINNERS

With Mamelodi Sundowns bowing out of the FIFA Club World Cup last week and Orbit College clinching victory in the Premier Soccer League promotion playoffs, the curtain has finally fallen on the 2024/25 domestic professional football season.

The only matter yet to be settled is the promotion race from the ABC Motsepe Leagues. Those decisive playoffs are set for the first week of July and will determine which three teams ascend to the professional ranks for the 2025/26 season — an expanded promotion quota made necessary by the expulsion of Royal AM.



BETWAY PREMIERSHIP: MAMELODI SUNDOWNS



For a brief moment, it seemed as though Sundowns might finally face a serious challenge this season. But when the curtain fell on the league campaign, it proved instead to be a record-breaking triumph for Miguel Cardoso's side.

Sundowns claimed an astonishing eighth consecutive league title, setting new benchmarks along the way. They amassed a record number of victories and scored more goals than ever before, all despite playing two fewer matches due to the Royal AM situation.

In the end, they finished a commanding twelve points clear, serving a stark reminder of the formidable gulf that rivals must bridge if they hope to mount a genuine challenge.



MTN8: ORLANDO PIRATES



While Mamelodi Sundowns have firmly owned the Premiership title in recent years, Orlando Pirates can lay a similar claim to dominance in the MTN8. Under José Riveiro, Pirates lifted the trophy for the third consecutive season, cementing their reputation as the competition's modern masters.

Their latest triumph did not come without drama, with the final against Stellenbosch FC marred by controversy and debate over key decisions. Yet, controversy aside, Pirates once again showcased their big-match temperament and ability to deliver when it counts.

This continued success in the MTN8 is an encouraging sign for a club that has emerged as Sundowns' most consistent challenger — proof that while the gap remains in the league, Pirates are building a foundation of silverware and resilience that could one day help them topple the giants of South African football.





CARLING KNOCKOUT: MAGESI



Few would have wagered on Magesi FC lifting silverware last season, but the Limpopo club delivered one of South African football's great surprises when Clinton Larsen guided them to Carling Knockout Cup glory.

Their remarkable run culminated in a dramatic final, where they came from behind to stun the heavily favoured Mamelodi Sundowns — a result that sent shockwaves through the domestic game. Central to Magesi's fairytale was the superb form of goalkeeper Elvis Chipezeze, whose heroics between the posts were instrumental in propelling the team to the showpiece event.

The triumph wasn't just an upset — it was arguably one of the most remarkable in the history of South African cup finals, a testament to Magesi's grit, belief, and refusal to be overawed by giants.



NEDBANK CUP: KAIZER CHIEFS



Kaizer Chiefs' decade-long wait for silverware finally came to an end as they overcame arch-rivals Pirates in the cup final, delivering long-awaited joy to the country's largest fan base.

The victory was more than a trophy — it was a cathartic release and a spark of renewed hope for the future. Though their league campaign remained underwhelming, Nasreddine Nabi's triumph in the cup provides a foundation to build on as Chiefs look to reclaim their place among the country's elite.

The success represents not just the end of those "drought" headlines, but also a subtle easing of the immense pressure that has weighed on Naturena in recent years.



MOTSEPE FOUNDATION CHAMPIONSHIP: DURBAN CITY



Durban City — formerly Maritzburg United — have secured their return to the top flight and can look back with pride at what they achieved this season.

Their promotion campaign was marked by resilience and determination, earning them a spot in the Betway Premiership for 2025/26. However, celebrations were overshadowed by controversy, with allegations of improper player registration sparking protests and delaying their final-day festivities. Once those disputes were resolved, City could finally savour their hard-earned success.

Yet there was a bittersweet twist: Simo Dladla, the coach who guided them to promotion, saw his contract end and was not retained to lead the KwaZulu-Natal side next season.





DSTV DISKI CHALLENGE: KAIZER CHIEFS



Just weeks before Kaizer Chiefs' senior team lifted the Nedbank Cup, their Diski side delivered silverware of their own, capping off a thrilling DStv Diski Challenge campaign with a richly deserved title.

Under the guidance of Vela Khumalo, the young Amakhosi showed impressive consistency and maturity well beyond their years. They lost just twice throughout the entire season — a testament to their discipline, cohesion, and attacking flair. When the dust settled on the campaign, Chiefs stood a commanding seven points clear of last season's champions, Stellenbosch FC.

It was a title won not only through skill but through hard work, organisation, and a clear commitment to developing talent the right way. For a club eager to restore its legacy of winning at all levels, this triumph was more than just another trophy: it was a beacon of hope for the future, showcasing the promise and depth within the next generation of Chiefs stars.



PSL PROMOTIONAL PLAYOFFS: ORBIT COLLEGE



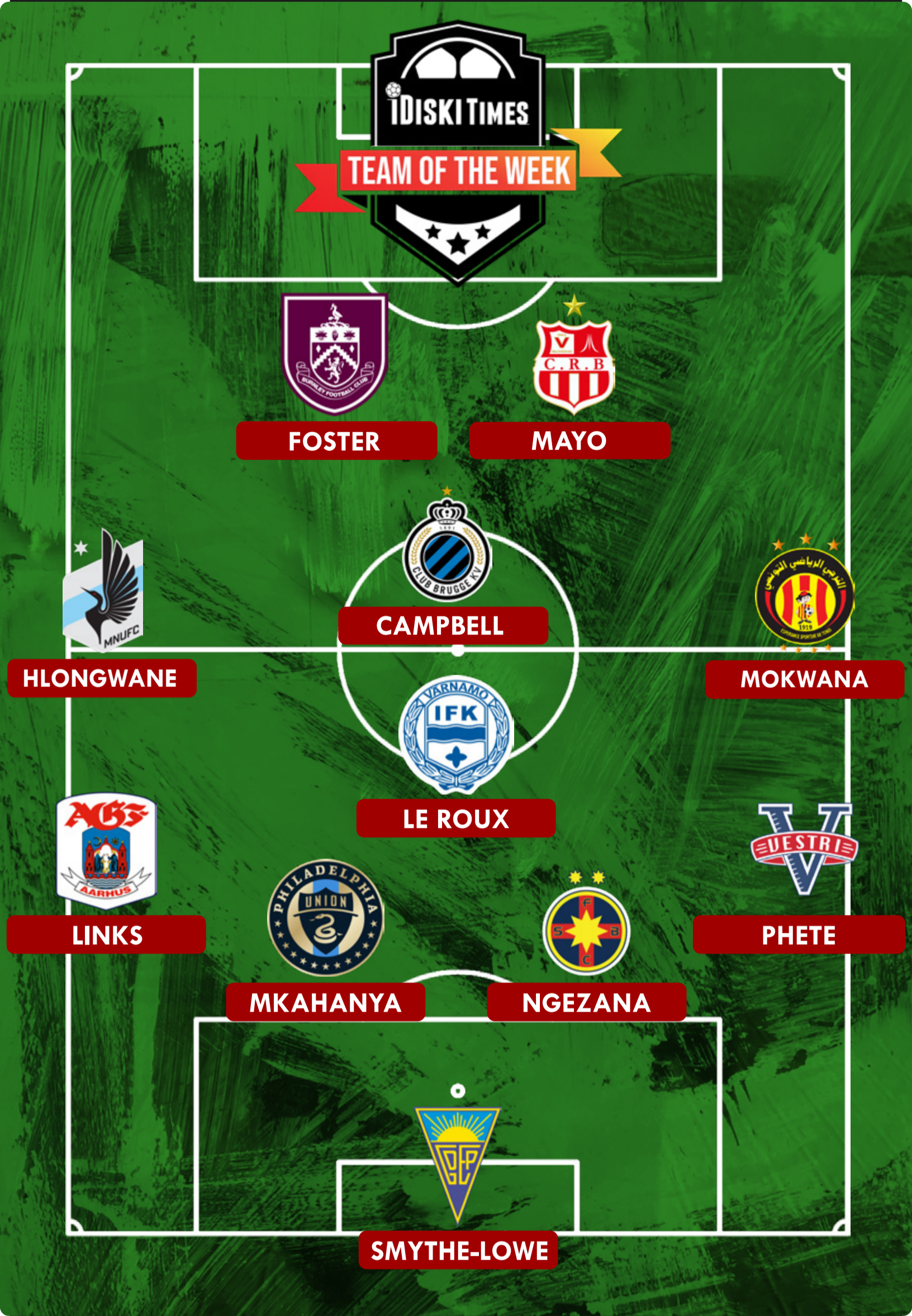
With two wins from their four playoff matches, the North West's Orbit College — runners-up in the Motsepe Foundation Championship — have secured a historic promotion and will experience top-flight football for the very first time.

Their rise marks an important milestone not only for the club but for the province itself: Orbit College will be the first North West representative in the Premiership since the days of Platinum Stars.

Few would have predicted Cape Town City's relegation — after all, this was a club that had never finished outside the top seven since its founding in 2016. Yet what unfolded was nothing short of a disastrous campaign for the Citizens, culminating in a dramatic and sobering fall from grace as they were unable to secure their status in the playoffs.



SA OVERSEAS-BASED PLAYERS XI (2024/25 SEASON)



ACE OF THE WEEK:
CASSIUS MAILULA

This week's iDiski Times Ace of the Week is Wydad AC forward Cassius Mailula, who made history by becoming just the fourth South African to score at the FIFA Club World Cup in the United States. Mailula opened the scoring early in Wydad's final group match against Al Ain, delivering a moment of hope before the Moroccan side ultimately fell 2-1 – a result that sealed the exit of all African teams before the knockout stages. In finding the net, Mailula joins an exclusive group of South Africans to have scored at the tournament this year, alongside his Wydad teammate Thembinkosi Lorch and the Mamelodi Sundowns duo Iqraam Rayners and Lebo Mothiba.



The Drawing Board with Moritz Kossmann

This week, we continue The Drawing Board series with iDiski Times' coaching guru MORITZ KOSSMANN.

Born in Germany, but having spent most of his life in South Africa, he came to the fore while working at the Ubuntu Football Academy. Moritz was then the head coach of Cape Town City's DStv

Diski Challenge team for the 2023/24 campaign and also in charge of the club youth's department. In June 2024, Kossmann became part of the technical team at the Austrian club SV Ried.

His columns have proved increasingly popular, and have been republished (and translated) worldwide. He has also provided content for one of the world-leading tactics blogs - spielverlagerung.com.

EXPERT INTERVIEW: Phillip Melchior

This week, we have the pleasure of chatting to Phillip Melchior. Phillip is the head of performance at the youth academy of SV Ried as well as a master of Sport Science. We will talk to Phillip around the very current topic of pre-season preparation, as well as the under-appreciated aspect of field sizes when designing training practices.

Phillip, thank you for your time. The first thing I want to talk to you about is the pre-season, since plenty of teams from around the world are currently in this phase of the season. Whilst contexts obviously differ greatly, from your perspective, what are the biggest myths and misconceptions when it comes to the pre-season?

PM: In my opinion, the biggest misconception is that you need to heavily physically preload in the pre-season from week one. The old school every day 1 hour runs before breakfast, grinds the players and gives them a hard welcome back, etc. – luckily, this view gets more and more discarded. Players, especially starters, will and also should physically and mentally recover for 2-3 weeks after the season. If your off-season is only 3 weeks long, they basically start from 0. If you then start with max tests and high volume in week one, the acute training volume will spike, setting them up for injury. You need to ease them in, all of course with the end goal in mind. If your off-season is longer and you can actually implement an off-season workout plan, this might change things.

Another misconception is that the players need to be physically finished after the pre-season and that you only “deload” from that point on. Of course, the players need to be as fit as possible for the games, but the development cannot stop. Long-term adaptations take time, but they will also last longer. Example: Best for pushing VO2 max would be to do intervals 2x a day in the pre-season. But if you don’t keep the volume like this, it will drop back to the level that is supported by your training. So you grind them in the pre-season over 4 weeks, but after the first 4 weeks of in-season, their performance drops as the stimulus is missing. Therefore, it would be smarter and safer to work them up to the level you need them to have and then try to push it over the season for 5 -10%, or any amount you can chronically hold. At the end of the season, they will be 10% better and as the off-season is so short, detraining will not be detrimental, and the chances of you being able to start the next season at a higher level are higher.

Lastly, players should not

play 90 minutes all the time. Yes, a heavy load week is recommended, but imagine already playing 1 month of in-season before the in-season starts and then complaining about the season lasting too long as players get fatigued.

The next question is about training aspects that could generally be considered a good idea. What are 3 or 4 recommendations when it comes to pre-season in general?

PM: Start easy with the games. Only 45 minutes per player in the first pre-season game, and then keep it mostly at 60 minutes.

Whatever you want the players to do over the whole season, expose them as early as possible, but in little dosages and then build up. Examples: isolated sprints, Strength training exercises, expected pressing action density, nutrition, etc. Always give them 1-2 weeks to adapt.

Try to individualise the loading as much as possible if needed. Use the physical performance test to determine which players could be pushed a little harder and need to be protected a little more. Think about injured players, players switching between leagues and national team players, which may start pre-season 1-2 weeks later, as they had a longer in-season and need a separate loading cycle. Example 1 round more or less in the 4v4 tournament in the first 2-3 weeks.

Start at medium-sized pitches in the first 5-7 days. Not too small and not too big. Let the players and physical structures adapt a bit before putting constraints on them.

Let’s move on to differentiating a little bit. What are some key differences between a pre-season at the junior and senior levels? How does the focus perhaps change, particularly from a physical perspective?



PM: In an optimal scenario, the senior player already knows what level he needs to perform and has already done it in the last season. Therefore, it can be seen as a return to performance, which is in general, easier than doing something that one has never done before. This is the hurdle the junior player has to overcome – reach a new level. If we consider the pre-season a loading meso-cycle, this loading will stop or decrease for the senior player at the start of the season. But for the junior player, who starts more often on the bench than on the pitch, the loading cycle should not stop at the season start. The junior player has to do more (high-quality work physically and/or technically) than the senior player to forge his path. Same for the youth player who plays every weekend in the academy. Yes, he needs to perform every week, but he also has to get ready for 2-3 games a week at a higher intensity. If we look at even younger players, the concept of pre- and in-season makes even less sense. They recover faster; therefore, planning deloads may not be necessary, and loads should be more adapted to their current maturation status and growth rate.

The next aspect is that of the sizes of fields for practices. This is something that coaches tend to struggle with at times. Do you have a guideline or a rule of thumb that may be easy to apply when it comes to deciding how big to make your practice grids?

PM: As a rule of thumb, I would say:

Small Sided Games: 30 – 100m² per player

Medium Sided Games: 100 – 200m² per player

Large Sided Games: 200 – 320m² per player

For rondos, you would take 30-50% of the m² per player, depending on the goal.

- Most important things to keep in mind:
- Larger pitches: more time & space, easier for off than def, more hamstringing load, higher intensity for accelerations and decelerations.
 - Smaller pitches: higher pressure, quicker decision, more decisions, less hamstringing load, more accelerations and decelerations.

What about the goalkeeper? If he has to take an active part in the build-up and can be pressed, he needs to be considered as

Size	Players (incl. GK)	Pitch Size	m ² per Player	Small	Medium	Large
LSG	1M1	60 x 100	273	54 x 90	60 x 100	70 x 110
	10v10	54 x 90	243	48 x 80	54 x 90	60 x 100
	9v9	48 x 80	213	42 x 70	48 x 80	54 x 90
	8v8	42 x 70	183	36 x 60	42 x 70	48 x 80
MSG	7v7	36 x 60	154	30 x 50	36 x 60	42 x 70
	6v6	30 x 50	125	24 x 40	30 x 50	36 x 60
	5v5	24 x 40	96	18 x 30	24 x 40	30 x 50
SSG	4v4	18 x 30	68	15 x 25	18 x 30	24 x 40
	3v3	12 x 20	40	12 x 20	15 x 25	18 x 30
	2v2	10 x 15	38	10 x 15	12 x 20	15 x 25
	1M	6 x 10	30	6 x 10	10 x 15	12 x 20

a player for the m². If he is more like an outside player who only bounces the ball and protects the goal, he can be neglected for the m².

Lastly, face reality – quality matters! If you made the space too big or too small, change it. The most important part is the adequate stimulus for the player. Don't let a m² number get in the way of the player's development.

From a physical perspective, can you roughly outline the demands that may be placed on the player in particularly small or large training fields?

PM: Larger pitches: more time & space, easier for off than def, more hamstringing load, higher intensity for accelerations and decelerations. Smaller pitches: higher pressure, quicker decision, more decisions, ~4x more ball touches, less hamstringing load, more accelerations and decelerations, more groin load. This is also why we start medium after the off-season. A balanced approach without too much of an overload.

Finally, let's dream a little bit. How do you see the role of head of performance/sport scientist change in the future at junior and senior professional levels? How do you anticipate your job evolving?

PM: I would not separate between the junior and the professional level. The job would be the same; it is always about availability and performance. Only the focus would either be more towards development or maintaining and freshness.

As there is more and more data available that guides the decisions, the role of a sports scientist/athletic trainer/head of performance gets separated into a data analysis part and the strength and conditioning part. These two parts go hand in hand and must be well coordinated, but the workload should be separated to ensure quality. If only one person has to do everything will be too much, or less detailed, and less innovation will take place, especially if you include injured and new players.

Thanks you for your time.



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