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THE DRAWING BOARD WITH MORITZ KOSSMANN & ACE OF THE WEEK

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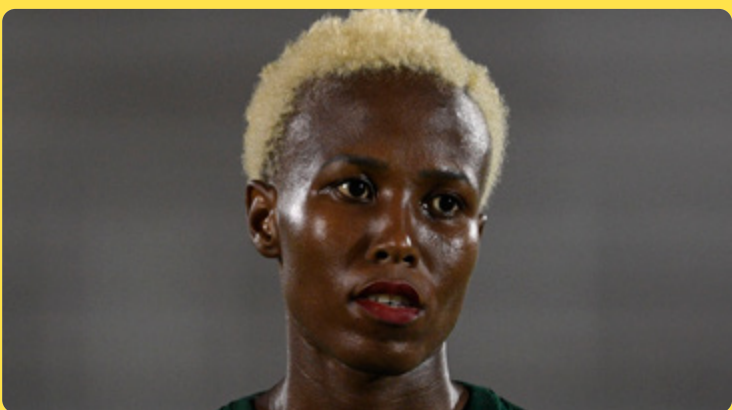
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TEAM OF THE WEEK
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CHIEFS GOALKEEPER FACES UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Kaizer Chiefs goalkeeper Fiacre Ntwari faces an uncertain future, with the player deemed surplus to requirements going into the 2025/26 season. The Rwanda international was a notable absentee from their pre-season in the Netherlands, with the player and club ready to end the ill-fated stint. Chiefs lured the 25-year-old at the start of last season from TS Galaxy, surrounding major optimism in a deal worth close to R6-million, but Ntwari struggled to establish himself with Brandon Petersen returning from injury and Bruce Bvuma now ahead of him in the pecking order. No concrete offers have been tabled to Chiefs at present, with the technical team advising his exit to open up a foreign spot for potential new recruits for the upcoming campaign.



BAFANA LEGEND TO BE PART OF NEW SIWELELE PROJECT?

Bafana Bafana legend Mark Williams is said to have been roped in as an advisor to the Chairman of Siwelele FC, Calvin Le John and could be part of the DStv Diski Challenge set-up. With the club acquiring the status of SuperSport United, and having appointed Lehlohonolo Seema as their new Head Coach - Williams has been a surprise addition to the newly-rebranded club in the Premier Soccer League. Roscoe Krieling departed before the takeover was completed to take over the reins as Orlando Pirates DDC coach, and sources have indicated that Williams could be part of the development set-up.



MOKWENA TO CHASE MAILULA FOR LATEST MOVE?

The newly-appointed MC Alger head coach Rulani Mokwena is believed to be keen on reuniting with Cassius Mailula at the Algerian Ligue 1 champions. Speculation has been rife in recent days about who Mokwena would be looking to sign to bolster his attack, with Mailula available after his loan with Wydad was not made permanent. Sources have suggested his name has been put forward for consideration with the club's board, as Mokwena looks to make swift moves before the start of the new campaign. Mokwena lured the former Mamelodi Sundowns talent to Morocco, where he scored six goals, with seven assists in 36 games across all competitions.



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SUNDOWNS EYE BAFANA DEFENDER

Mamelodi Sundowns have identified Bafana Bafana and TS Galaxy defender Khulumani Ndamane as one of their targets ahead of the 2025/26 season.

Ndamane has enjoyed a whirlwind 12 months since joining the club from Kaizer Chiefs, where he starred in the DStv Diski Challenge but never made the step up to the senior squad.

But at Galaxy - he's emerged as one of the leading defenders in the league at the age of 21 and made his senior international debut for South Africa in their recent 0-0 draw against Tanzania at the Peter Mokaba Stadium last month.

Bafana head coach Hugo Broos touted the player for a massive future, as a left-footed defender, displaying composure, aerial presence and physicality, needed to succeed at the highest level.

His frame has naturally set him out as a major prospect, and European interest from FCSB, the Romanian giants who currently have Siyabonga Ngezana on the books - made initial contact.

However, sources have confirmed that the loan with an option to make the deal permanent was rebuffed, while Sundowns

and Orlando Pirates were looming during that period.

Talks remain ongoing between Masandawana and the Rockets, with deliberations over whether there should be a loan return for the upcoming season.

While it remains unlikely - at this stage - Sundowns view Ndamane as a long-term solution in their defence, which has clearly been lacking a dominant left side defender, and the Lucas Suarez gamble on loan ended with the Argentine returning to his homeland.

Ndamane featured in 27 games for Galaxy in his debut professional season, missing only six matches of their entire campaign across all competitions.

Galaxy have already lost Lebone Seema to Pirates in this window - with another major overhaul approaching, after their record fifth-placed finish.

Meanwhile, Sundowns have been unusually quiet, with no official signing as yet - but Rivaldo Coetzee, Sipho Mbule, Thabang Sibanyoni, Lebogang Maboe, Sifiso Ngobeni and Sanele Tshabalala are the players released thus far.

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JUNIOR KHANYE: I WISH NKOTA ALL THE BEST IN SAUDI ARABIA

Mohau Nkota is the latest South African heading abroad after it was announced that Saudi Pro League side Al-Ettifaq had signed the 20-year-old from Orlando Pirates.

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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‘Mohau Nkota A Lesson To All Young Players’ - Junior Khanye

“Mohau Nkota moving to Saudi Arabia should serve as a lesson to all young players in South Africa.

“If you play for Orlando Pirates, Kaizer

Chiefs and Mamelodi Sundowns, once they give you a chance as a young player, you should grab it with both hands.

“Nkota is not a seasoned player, he is still young. With only one full season, he has raised his hands for Orlando Pirates.

“We saw him in the CAF Champions League scoring important goals and helping his club go to the semi-finals of the Champions League.

“Credit must go to Pirates and Jose Riveiro for giving these young kids a chance.

“Credit to Joseph Makhanya as well for preparing these young players in the Diski Challenge.

“I wish Nkota all the best in Saudi Arabia where he will face the likes of Cristiano Ronaldo and Karim Benzema.”





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HAS CHIEFS' PRE-SEASON LAID FOUNDATION FOR SUCCESS?

By Matshelane Mamabolo

On the face of it, Kaizer Chiefs' pre-season tour of the Netherlands was a resounding failure. A single win out of five matches is nothing to enthuse about. It is a 20% return for Pete's sake. Now that's not something to get the fans excited. It is not the kind of result to have the opposition quivering in their boots, is it?

This, after all, is a team intent on returning to their glory days; a team eager to move up the table and avoid the past two seasons' ignominy of finishing out of the top eight; a team looking to reclaim

their status among the country's top three; a team set on being competitive on the continent.

If their venture into the market from which they secured the services of a handful of new players was to convince us that they mean business, there should have been a hint of such in their matches out in Holland.

But none of Ethan Chislett, Flavio Silva, or Nkanyiso Shinga shone bright in Holland. The trio, revealed amidst much fanfare on the club's media social platforms to raise hopes that Amakhosi have signed stars of international repute, did not set the Netherlands alight.

Granted, the glass is half-full. The Amakhosi faithful will no doubt point to that 1-0 win over PEC Zwolle and say there's a glimmer of hope for the future. Yet the losses to Vitesse (2-1), Utrecht (4-0) and FC Twente (2-1) paint a gloomy picture for the campaign ahead. Or do they?

Then again, don't they often say pre-season tours such as this one that Chiefs embarked upon are not about results but rather more a case of team-building ahead of the upcoming campaign? Coach Nasreddine Nabi's assessment of their tour was a glowing report – the Tunisian describing himself as 'optimistic' for the upcoming 2015/26 campaign.

"We saw a lot of positives in our training matches against very strong Dutch opponents. The players have started to understand the way I want them to play, and they gel well as a strong unit," the Tunisian, who is going into his second season with Amakhosi, told the club's website.

"One of the conditions of having a good season is having a good pre-season - that's where the foundation is laid. We didn't only want quality opponents," Nabi explained, "We also wanted quantity. Parallel with this, we did some tough physical work at training, even doing double-sessions on the day before a match. We really pushed the guys hard during the training sessions in Holland. It was tough, extremely tough. However, they never complained; always giving their best. That was inspiring to see."

Also inspired by their pre-season tour is Marketing Director Jessica Motaung, who was all smiles, as she officially launched the club's 2025/26 kit at the club's village in Naturena on Monday.

NABI: "WE SAW A LOT OF POSITIVES IN OUR TRAINING MATCHES AGAINST VERY STRONG DUTCH OPPONENTS. THE PLAYERS HAVE STARTED TO UNDERSTAND THE WAY I WANT THEM TO PLAY, AND THEY GEL WELL AS A STRONG UNIT."





“It was a very, very exciting pre-season that we had, I must say. First of all, a great space to be in, for the team to really strategise and really for the coaches and the players to really blend and connect. But also for the types of teams we played, great competition, very important that we expose our team to good top-flight football, and very excited about the work that was done. I think it was a great opportunity for the new guys to kind of integrate, and also for our youth players who came in, and I think it really showed that they’re hungry, you know, they’ve got that hunger in them coming out of the development and wanting to be in the senior team. So it was really great for the team to really integrate and engage. And I think it was very successful in terms of the playing style being looked at, the playing model being looked at, and just really for the technical team to get some work done.”

She pleaded for patience in relation to the new players: “Well, my take on the new players is, you know, this is pre-season. You know, players have to be given a chance, whether they’re coming from the youth or they’re coming from other teams or other places. It’s important [for them] to be given the chance to really get to know the team, get to play with the different players they’re playing with. So, I think our supporters need to give them time. You know, the proof is in the pudding. Let the players go on the pitch and do the work as the season progresses.”

At a club such as Chiefs though, patience is somewhat taboo, and especially in the upcoming season in which the supporters will be expecting the club to be competitive given their victory in the season-ending Nedbank Cup.

While Motaung and Nabi seem to have been won over, the ‘neutrals’ are yet to be convinced. “The hardest thing is to be able to make a true assessment from a very small window of what I saw,” said former Chiefs goalkeeper and television analyst William Shongwe.

“Some of these new players – like Chislett and Shinga showed some glimpses of their abilities. Chislett had some exciting attacking moments and because of a bit of history of what he has done in the past, there’s reason to expect him to be a big player. My big question is how quickly he will settle in the local league.”

Shongwe says he has previously seen players coming into the domestic league from the so-called higher leagues but failing to make the expected impact



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and his hope is that Chiefs’ new signings buck the trend.

“Some of those players coming from overseas come here thinking it is a lower league, but we’ve seen that it can be hard here and in the past years we’ve seen some going away without making an impact. I hope it is not the same with these new signings at Chiefs. Flavio had very little engagement on the tour, so it is hard to make an assessment of what he can do. At least with (Siphelele) Ndlovu, (Paseka) Mako and (Thabiso) Monyane we are aware of what they can do because they’ve been signed from the local clubs.”

The former Eswatini goalkeeper says the new signings have a great opportunity to showcase themselves in the Toyota Cup against Asante Kotoko at Durban’s Moses Mabhida Stadium this weekend.

“You can’t write them off early. They will need a little bit of time to settle in. Let the games begin in earnest, and we will be able to assess them better. The Toyota Cup is coming up, and Nabi will remember that this was his baptism of fire last season (he lost 4-0 to Young Africans in his first match in charge of Chiefs) and will be able to prepare the new players. The challenge for Chiefs is that after this, they don’t have the MTN8 to play in, but they will then be





going straight into the league. And if they are to do well, they need to hit the ground running, and that might not give Nabi much chance to experiment. So, hopefully he saw enough from their tour of the Netherlands to have decided on his first team for the campaign.”

Former Chiefs defender Morgan Gould says the pre-season was a success:

“I think the tour was pretty much a good one because we don’t really consider the results in this regard because pre-season is all about team work, introducing new players and understanding the philosophy of the coach. And with new players comes the process of integrating them into the team and it looks like even the youth players coming in need to be inducted into the team and preparing them for what’s to come. This coming season Kaizer Chiefs are going to be playing an average of 45 to 55 matches in all competitions as the continental challenge is going to be part of their season.”

It is for that reason that Gould feels judging Chiefs through the results would be folly.

“I don’t really think you should look at their results. Yes 20 percent is not a good going rate. However, there are the physical and mental aspects that you are trying to fix.”

Looking ahead to the new season, he believes Amakhosi have something to build on from the previous campaign.

“They won the Nedbank Cup and psychologically it is a good one for those who were there. The past ten years were testing and they came out with a trophy so it is good for them to reflect on where they come from and it can give them a good platform for the next season.”

Unlike Shongwe, Gould has seen enough of the new signings to make an informed assessment. “What Chiefs have done is build their team from the back with the signings of Thabiso Monyane and Paseka Mako. They are

WILLIAM SHONGWE: “SOME OF THESE NEW PLAYERS – LIKE CHISLETT AND SHINGA SHOWED SOME GLIMPSES OF THEIR ABILITIES.”

fullbacks that come with a modern type of defending which is always attacking. They are forward-thinking players. Ethan comes with a little bit of a different twist, because he is a ball-playing midfielder that always wants to be on the ball.”

The former Bafana Bafana defender is also excited by academy graduate Thulani Mabaso: “I’d like to see how they include youngster Thulani Mabaso. I think he’s an exciting player and he’s doing a phenomenal job. Another one is definitely Aiden McCarthy. He’s gone through the ranks and slowly becoming the player that he wants to become. Also, he’s got a lot of weight on his shoulder because his dad (Fabian) was a former player for the same club. Flavio, yes , we still need to see more from Flavio. But I think it’s just a matter of time before he shows what he’s capable of.”

The reality for Flavio in particular is that he has joined a club where the supporters’ patience is very thin and he would do well to win them over as soon as possible.

The weekend’s Toyota Cup clash against Kotoko presents him with a great opportunity to endear himself to the Amakhosi faithful. It is not just for him though but Chiefs as a whole. For given the poor results of the tour of the Netherlands, only victory in Durban will have their fans excitedly looking forward to the next campaign and believing word from Taung Village that the new season is one in which the glory days return.





‘BANYANA HAD TO MAKE A STATEMENT’



If there is a person who knows all about making a statement at a major tournament, it's TS Galaxy Queens and Banyana Banyana midfielder NOMVULA 'LIPSTICK LADY' KGOALE. The 29-year-old Zebediela-born player wore the famous red mark on her lips during Banyana's successful 2022 Women's Africa Cup of Nations (WAFCON) campaign. That statement also earned her a boots endorsement deal with one of the top apparel makers. Kgoale speaks about this with iDiski Times writer LETHABO KGANYAGO in this edition. She also speaks about how the defending champions needed to make a statement in the current tournament ongoing in Morocco, where they are currently in the semi-finals, how Thembi Kgatlana's space has been covered in the team, why Jermaine Seoposenwe deserves to leave the international stage a winner and the legacy of her generation, among other things.

Lethabo Kganyago: We appreciate your time, Nomvula. Let's just firstly go through Banyana's group stage performance. What did you make of it?

Nomvula Kgoale: It's been a very peculiar start from Banyana, but I don't blame them because the group all together, they haven't spent a lot of time together. We've seen new faces like Ronnel Donnelly, Lonathemba Mhlango, and Sibulele [Holweni] was out for a little bit from the group, but now she's back as well. The game against Ghana, I expected Ghana to give them a lot more trouble, and I'll say why. I've been following Ghana, how they've been working hard to try and revive their team because in the past, if people can remember, Ghana used to be a force to be reckoned with.

“BANYANA HAD TO MAKE THAT STATEMENT TO SHOW PEOPLE THAT WE ARE ACTUALLY CAPABLE.”

They used to give us trouble from the U17s, U20s, up until the senior team. We know Nigeria has been winning the WAFCON, but Ghana has always been one of the teams that we know are really good. So I was impressed with Banyana Banyana winning that game, but I was also surprised why Ghana didn't step up to the plate. I'm obviously biased because I want Banyana to win [but] I expected a lot more from Ghana. With the Tanzania game, I expected a draw or for us to win. I wasn't surprised when we drew against them because if people can remember, I think it was last year or the year before I was in the squad, we did play against Tanzania. I could feel a lot of resistance from them. They are a really, really good team. I just don't know what's missing from them. Maybe that finishing touch in their attacking third, hence the first goal they scored right now in the WAFCON.

LK: I think naturally, after that draw, there was a lot of criticism on the team. Do you feel that kind of response against Mali was exactly how they should have even started the tournament?

NK: Yes, I think so. You are head on, on to that one because I think they wanted to make a statement, because people were like, oh, Banyana is so weak, and how can you draw against Tanzania? But forgetting that Tanzania is actually good, there wasn't so much wrong in that draw. But Banyana had to make that statement to show people that we



are actually capable, so don't worry about this draw. Just keep on believing in us, because we are much more capable of doing well in the tournament.

LK: How big has the return of Fifi [Refiloe Jane] and Bambanani Mbane to the team been, and do you think they are still going to get better?

NK: I believe so. Personally, Bambanani has to be my best-performing player so far in the Banyana squad. I mean, her ball distribution, super accurate. Refiloe Jane, obviously, you can't buy experience. You can see her ushering the players on the field as they are playing, and her contribution, just her presence on the field says a lot. It boosts the confidence of the players and the morale. So you can see the rapport of the team, it's now just starting to connect, it's beautiful to see, as well as the team just gelling altogether.

LK: And of course, we have to talk about the penalty shootout win against Senegal...

NK: I think Banyana Banyana's penalties were world class, especially Bambanane's one, I thought that there was no way the goalkeeper was going to get there. Gabby's penalty as well. I thought it was really good. So we also have got to give credit to Andile Dlamini. I thought that she did well with those penalty saves. But we know Andile is very good with penalties, so I expected her to save one or two.

LK: Obviously, before the tournament, a lot of people were worried about the absenteeism of Thembi Kgatlane, but then we've seen goals come from different players so far. Are those worries rested now?

NK: Perhaps. You know, I just don't know what people want in general (chuckles). We cannot take out the abilities that Thembi has, the speed, being robust on the field, being demanding, wanting to get the goals and demanding results as well. But the coaches obviously have picked other players, having faith in them that whatever abilities that they have, they can be able to contribute in the team. So her absence, in my opinion, is very clear. We can see that we are lacking that speed up front, but you have a Jermaine [Seoposenwe] that's hard working. This is her last tournament, and she just wants to leave everything out there, that's Jermaine in her nature. I've played with her from the U17, U20, senior team, and even collegiate



“THEMBI KGATLANA'S ABSENCE, IN MY OPINION, IS VERY CLEAR. WE CAN SEE THAT WE ARE LACKING THAT SPEED UP FRONT BUT...”

level. I didn't play with her, but I would always watch her games while I was in the USA, and I know the USA mentality, you go until the last whistle. So that attitude in her, it hasn't left her. You can see that she wants to leave everything on the field, so it almost covers that gap of Thembi. But at the same time, I feel we must not get too excited until we win that last game when we get to the final. I have so much faith in Banyana Banyana.

LK: And speaking about Jermaine and her qualities, how important will it be for her to leave the international stage with another gold medal?

NK: I think it would be an insane achievement for her. In the USA, there's this culture where you start as a freshman, sophomore, junior year and senior year. So that's four years altogether. So that culture, that fourth year where everybody knows that this is their last year, the attitude of the players, how they want to play the game, because they know that this is their last, you get to feel every emotion. Everything around you, the fans, you stepping on the field, it just feels different, and it makes it even more special. So I can only imagine how it feels like on a national level for her because it's been like that in the USA.

She's experienced that, and I know that too, but on a national level, it's also another thing. I think Banyana Banyana have to keep Jermaine on the field by winning each and every game until they get to that final. I respect Jermaine Seoposenwe because I've grown with her from the U17s. I've seen how I even share some of her attributes. When things are not going our way, we are almost mad at everything, not because we are rude or aggressive, we want to get results out of this team. Even if she's not performing well on that day, because of her hard work, because of wanting to achieve something on that day, she's robust like that. So I'm personally going to miss that. I'm personally going to miss somebody who pushes me, even if I'm not doing well or I'm not giving my best, and I know, like, hey, I need to wake up now because I'm sleeping today and we are in the game, and we need to get those results. She's a really, really good leader. She once said in one of her interviews that she's a leader, but who doesn't wear an armband. She gets things done. That's who she is.

LK: She really does, and naturally, most of you from this golden generation are going to leave the international stage. It's a natural succession. What is going to be the legacy of this generation?

NK: I think more than anything, winning that WAFCON because it was in everybody's eyes. Everybody could see that success, but things that happened behind the scenes, which are probably us fighting Federations, talking to players individually, our performances day in day out at practice, watching us fight to get the best out of each other. I don't know if people know this, but for myself to even get to Spain and Hildah Magaia to get to Sweden, Korea eventually, it was because Thembi was pushing myself and her. She connected myself and Hildah Magaia to her agent, saying you have to move out of South Africa to improve your level so that we can be able to compete with these other countries and see something different. Myself, Kaylin Swart, Robin Moodaly and Jermaine Seoposenwe, when we went to the United States, it was because we needed to leave the country so we can experience a different culture and challenge ourselves to be better. If people don't remember as well, in 2010, when the whole country was buzzing about the 2010 Men's World Cup, we went to the



"I THINK BANYANA BANYANA HAVE TO KEEP JERMAINE ON THE FIELD BY WINNING EACH AND EVERY GAME UNTIL THEY GET TO THAT FINAL."

first-ever U17 Women's World Cup. When we got there, we're like, 'Guys, the level is so much higher, we need to do better'. So that's how far back it goes. So that WAFCON, it was like, 'Hey, can you see these girls, they've been doing it for such a long time.' So only during WAFCON were we able to be like, 'Ah, yes guys, here we are, this is who we are, and this is what we do.' And the World Cup Last 16 round was a cherry on top.

LK: Oh, I agree, and Nomvula, when you talk about the fighting spirit in the team, this team has been fighting on and off the pitch even prior to this tournament. But do you guys have hope that it will ever stop, that one day Banyana will depart for a major tournament without any issues?

NK: I have hope. That's the only thing I can have at this moment, but with what's happening currently, I think we are going in a loop, the same thing happening over and over and over again. And as a player, I may not have enough information to even dissect like what's truly causing all these hiccups. Every single time, we have to deal with the same issue. There must be something wrong somewhere, but the sad part is that I cannot put my finger on it and say that's the problem because of a lack of evidence. If I'm going to say that's a problem, so and so is doing that, I'd be accusing people of things that I have no evidence of. So I can only hope as a player because I'm in the game. But the little information

I can have and gather can make me feel much better to understand that, ‘Okay, no wonder I’m experiencing this because maybe the Federation is not paying us money’. Why are they not paying us money? Then that’s where I hit a brick wall, because I can’t get through that. I don’t know what’s going on. So I can only hope and even the departure of Sasol is more heartbreaking because you’re wondering, why would such a great company that has supported Banyana Banyana for over 16 years not renew their contract, like what happened in those boardrooms? Those are my questions. What is it that they couldn’t agree on with the Association to continue supporting us? It’s disheartening, but I have hope.

LK: You know the opportunities that come with competing at a major tournament. We saw at the last WAFCON how you were wearing red lipstick also came with traction. Did that better your life even a little bit financially, or even open other doors?

NM: Partly, partly. If there’s one thing I never actually got my hands on, it’s a lipstick endorsement, just to get closer to that dream of mine, because people don’t understand how personal my relationship is with a lipstick. It does so much more than just you looking at those red lips. But it has indeed gotten me a Puma sponsorship. I love Puma with all my heart. They were able to give me value, you know, see that I’m not just a girl who wears red lipstick, but I know what I’m doing when I’m on the soccer field. So I think if there’s one thing that’s left for me, it’s that lipstick endorsement. I’m still searching for it.

LK: We are definitely going to be publishing this, so hopefully someone who has connections in the lipstick business will read this and something comes from this. Obviously, you’re not part of the WAFCON team right now, are you entertaining thoughts of retirement as well, or just that you’ve not been selected this time?

NK: Retirement has been on my mind, but not as much, but it’s a thought I think I’m comfortable entertaining in the coming years. It’s going to have to come. It’s something that’s inevitable. So right now, yeah, I’m not being selected, another reason would be I’m injured. People maybe don’t know that. So yeah, retirement has to come, but it just seems like it’s close, but yet so far.

LK: Lastly, I want to talk about the Hollywoodbets Super League, how TS Galaxy Queens have started the season. You have beefed up your team, signing the likes of Fifi and



“WE ALSO HAVE GOT TO GIVE CREDIT TO ANDILE DLAMINI. I THOUGHT THAT SHE DID WELL WITH THOSE PENALTY SAVES. BUT WE KNOW ANDILE IS VERY GOOD WITH PENALTIES, SO I EXPECTED HER TO SAVE ONE OR TWO.”

Leandra Smeda. And I look at your position on the log, second, four points behind Mamelodi Sundowns with a game in hand. Do you feel that this is the season where you have it in your hands to give Sundowns a real push for this title?

NK: We have to. I’ve said in my previous interviews on other platforms that [Kaizer] Chiefs and [Orlando] Pirates have got to at least have women’s teams, because Sundowns is without a doubt, a powerhouse. But they need resistance because if they don’t have resistance, it gets too boring. People season in, season out, they just know, here they are, they are going to win. But after Mr [Tim] Sukazi, had a women’s team, I was like, of course, now here we are, because other good players from other teams then can flock to TS Galaxy. We do have talent in this country, but not everybody can go to Sundowns, or should go to Sundowns, who’s good. So they need to have that resistance so that they can feel that this was worthwhile when they lift that trophy. Four points from Sundowns, so yes, we have to keep them on their toes to understand that they should not relax. It’s going to be interesting to have to play against Sundowns this year, because as you’ve seen, our team. We just lack streaming so that people can see why TS Galaxy is number two.

LK: Thank you so much, Nomvula.

EX COACHES CONFIDENT MASINDI CAN FLY AT BUCS

THE DISCERNING ORLANDO PIRATES fan would have noticed just how little has been said of some of their new signings. The focus of the Buccaneers' transfer window business has, perhaps understandably, been largely on Sipho Mbule and Oswin Appollis. After all, these two are the biggest names to have been recruited by the perennial bridesmaids as they intend to take over from Mamelodi Sundowns and be the belle of the ball for the upcoming campaign. Do not, however, misconstrue that to mean the rest of the signings are just there to add to the numbers. The other new players are quality signings with the potential to even usurp the above-mentioned duo in contribution to the Buccaneers' success. One of those is Masindi Confidence Nemtajela, who joined from Marumo Gallants. Only the proper football fan would be aware of the midfielder from Chiawelo, Soweto.

The coaches who have worked closely with him – among them 'Yeye' Letsholonyane and Dan Malesela – say he is possibly the best signing by the Buccaneers and anticipate him to be a colossal figure for the team in black and white in the upcoming season. Senior soccer writer MATSHELANE MAMABOLO also canvassed the views of the coaches who groomed Nemtajela from his formative years, and – almost to a man – they all sing from the same hymnbook, describing Nemtajela as a complete player who will give Pirates a lot both in attack and defensively. And they all agreed that he has the mental fortitude to make it at the big club where the pressure is immense.

Vincent 'Ginola' Mashele – coached him at Senaoane Gunners

"I worked with him at River Park when we played tournaments and then at Senaone Gunner in the ABC Motsepe, from where Marumo Gallants signed him. My lingering memory of him was when he was just 13 years old and I invited him to play for me – he was at

Chiawelo United – in Jabu Maluleke's tournament. I saw he was going to make it in the game then because he competed with the older guys, but he mesmerised them. When I got the job at Gunners a few years later, I told him to join us.

"Coach Mike Ntombela – the club's chairman – said to me, 'Ginola, this boy is too young,' but we signed him nevertheless and we gave him the occasional cameo and sometimes a full game because I could see his potential. He was with us for just one season, and Marumo came for him.

"What I love about him is that he's brave. The playmakers of today are spoilt brats who just love to fall about and get free kicks. Masindi is different; he has krag (force) and can defend as well as attack. He's gifted and skilful. Pirates have made a very good signing. Of course, he is going to have to work hard to make it, and I see him competing directly with [Thalente] Mbatha.

"The one thing I am sure of is that he's not going to be big-headed now that he's at a super club as some players have done before. He's a private kid who does not like a lot of things. At our club, we instilled discipline and prepared for the professional ranks. Unlike other players who continue to want to play kasi tournaments after turning pro, he does not. He has a strong personality and that's what will make him succeed at Pirates."

Siyabonga Makhathini – coached him at Chiawelo United

"He is a very talented player, and I remember that match we played against a team of legends, including Jabu Maluleke and Tintswalo Tshabalala, when he was just 13. We were trailing 2-0, and I brought him on and he changed the game for us. He bought us time by keeping the ball away from the opponents, and he thrilled the crowd



with his skills. We should have lost that match by a lot of goals, but it ended 2-0.

“The one thing I can tell you about him is that he hates losing. We used to fight when he was younger because he loved football too much and would even cry when we lost. He wanted to win all the time and would push his teammates and encourage them as if he’s the coach. He’d tell them, ‘Guys, let’s play, they’ve got legs just like us.’ He is not afraid of anyone, he does not care who the opposition is, and he’s got leadership qualities. He will make it at Pirates, he is very strong mentally, and he’s gone through a lot of good hands here who guided him on the things to avoid. We were not surprised when he became a professional, and we are not surprised he is at Pirates now.”

Khumbelo Makana Khonzani – worked with him at Chiawelo Juventus (SAB league)

“Masindi is a hard worker, and I am sure he will be successful at Pirates. I coached him from when he was 10 until he was 21, and I am not surprised he has joined such a big club. He showed potential from a young age, and I remember the senior guys coming to watch him when he was just 11 and everyone agreeing that the boy was a star. When he reached the under-17s, we played him with the senior players in the LFA, one or two seasons with the senior players. I had a friend who coached Pull Together [FC], and I transferred him there, and that’s when Senaoane Gunners asked him to come over to them.

“Though he is naturally a skilful player, he can sometimes be dirty. Once, when we won the Sipiwe Tshabalala’s under-15 tournament, he played like

“WHAT I LOVE ABOUT HIM IS THAT HE’S BRAVE. THE PLAYMAKERS OF TODAY ARE SPOILT BRATS WHO JUST LOVE TO FALL ABOUT AND GET FREE KICKS. MASINDI IS DIFFERENT.”

[Willard] Katsande and still scored the winning goal for us. Based on what I saw of him at Marumo last season, he will make it at Pirates. He has to compete with [Thalente] Mbatha, but I believe he will do well.

“The good thing about him is that he is a disciplined boy. I always tell my players I never want to see them on the streets at night. If we meet after 8 pm, there’s going to be a fight. The boys used to hang around at the park after training instead of going home; that’s why I instituted that rule. So, Masindi took that seriously, and he is not a street person. That discipline will help him succeed in the PSL.”

Dan Malesela – coached him at Marumo Gallants

“I worked with him for a season at Marumo, having also known him from the then DDC of the same club. I think he’s just this confident young man who does not doubt himself, and that’s a very good trait to have as a player. You can underestimate him when you look at his physique, but he is physically very strong and tactically, he is growing from time to time. He’s a rare player who is coachable and takes instructions. I just hope that he does not lose his way like most players have done when they get onto the big stage. He is smart as well, you know those players who have football intelligence and are very

streetwise.

“I used him mostly as an eight as he has the ability to defend and to attack but I see him developing into a very good six in the future because of his football wisdom and versatility.

“Whether he makes it at Pirates will be dependent on a few factors. One of those is how the supporters react to him. Masindi is not flashy, but he is a very effective player, and I don’t know if the supporters will be able to pick it up. The challenge is that at big clubs, people are influenced by what the supporters cry about. So it will be dependent on the coaches to stick with him no matter what the crowd says. But I don’t think this man [coach Abdeslam Ouaddou] just picked him for no reason. He worked with him at Marumo and must believe he can fit in at Pirates.

**Reneilwe
Letsholonyane –
worked with him at the
national team**

“I had the opportunity to work with him when we played against Malawi in the CHAN qualifiers and also in the COSAFA CUP in Bloemfontein. He’s an exciting player to watch – very energetic, technically decent, great ball control and good at keeping possession. He plays as an eight and is very effective there, although he can also play as a 10 or a six. I don’t like to use the term ‘box-to-box’, but he is definitely a player who gives you that kind of balance as a number eight. He is not strong and big physically, but he’s a fighter and does help with defensive duties, and then going forward, he gives you a lot of options.

“Looking at the Pirates squad, I think the coach is going to have a nice headache in making his choice of who he plays because he has [Makhehleri] Makhaula, Thalete [Mbatha], Sipho [Mbule] and young [Simphele] Selepe. But Masindi is different to all of them in terms of an eight because his energy is different. His movement with and without the ball is different to all of them because they all have qualities of being a six-and-half they support at the back, whereas his qualities are also more of a 10 – he is not scared to move into the attacking role and to get into the opposition box. So if the coach wants numbers forward as quickly as possible and can afford to leave Makhaula behind, then Masindi is your go-to guy. But he is after a more



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conservative approach, and if you don’t want your six and eight moving forward, then you don’t use him.

“He will cope with the pressure that comes with playing for a big club. He’s a clever, typical boy from eKasi, and for me, that’s always the first thing I check in a player before technique and other football-related stuff. Do you have the mind to deal with and cope with situations, especially when conditions are not favourable? When he was with us for the CHAN qualifiers and during COSAFA he looked like a kid who wants to be better and who wants to compete – and at Pirates and Chiefs you need that. You need to be resilient and streetwise, you’ve got to have a thick skin to deal with anything, and he struck me as having all that. You are talented, so the playing is not a problem, but it is your mental fortitude that will determine if you succeed. I believe Masindi will succeed at Pirates.”

‘WHY SEBELEBELE DESERVED HIS PIRATES MOVE’

Speculation has been rife about TS Galaxy going into the 2025/26 season with several players leaving the club, some being sold, and not just any players, but key figures. Top scorer Dzenan Zajmovic, Keagan Dolly, Lebene Seema, Sphiwe Mahlangu, Kamogelo Sebelebele and possibly even Khulumani Ndamane in the coming weeks. The FIFA Transfer Ban hangs over the club at present, and reports of bids for the club’s status have also surfaced. iDiski Times Senior Journalist, LORENZ KÖHLER went out to get clarity on the situation with head coach ADNAN BEGANOVIC who assumed the role, succeeding Sead Ramovic, where he initially was the assistant to the now CR Belouizdad boss, with the club winless after four games – but ended the season in a club record fifth placed finish.

Lorenz Köhler: Coach Adnan, thank you for taking your time to meet me for this interview – you have been in pre-season for a couple of weeks now, how are you feeling about the squad? Without mentioning any names of who is coming in, we have seen who has left. So how are you feeling about the squad going into the 2025/26 season?

Adnan Beganovic: Look, it’s our job every pre-season, we have a new beginning. We are a club that produces and sells players. But we also got new players, young players and then it’s our job again to improve those players, and then our goal is to be among the top eight clubs in the league. Sometimes it’s not easy - it won’t be easy this season after selling some players. But when we account for everything and watch what happened in the past, we can be happy because we have space to improve. We sell players as it’s the vision of the club – it’s our vision to follow. We agree with the Chairman about that part, and it’s now on us to select the players to try and find the best 24 players we can for the next season, and then hope we can have the success we had last season.

LK: With coach Nermin Basic, you guys achieved a record league position for the club. Was it something you expected, given the fact it was a tough start to the season? Honestly, did you expect this?

AB: Uh... in the beginning, when I took over, we had a deal, let’s just try and stay in the league. Then you know, you have wishes, you have energy in the beginning for success, but you need to have luck. I know what we spoke about, how hard we worked and how the whole squad reacted to that change. I’m so happy to have that record, to crush another record to win 7-0 in the cup. It will be tough to repeat. But you know, what we want is a good start to the season, top eight game against Sekhukhune [United] in our last game as preparation for the league and I want to see a team that has spirit,



“TS GALAXY HAS PRODUCED MANY PLAYERS IN THIS LEAGUE. MIKE SEBELEBELE NOW, WHEN WE SPOKE BEFORE, I SAID IF THERE’S SOMEONE WHO DESERVES IT, IT’S HIM.”

structure and then we can expect to prepare our team physically to play a whole 90 minutes how we want and then how we prepare our team for the entire season.

LK: You lost a very important player in the form of your top goal scorer, Dzenan Zajmovic. How big of a miss will he be next season, just not having him around?

AB: It’s the same every season, we sell some players, we release some players, but I think we keep some crucial players. We have two central defenders, two midfielders, and strikers, or one or two wingers we have already. I think we can be happy about that part. Yes, we sell some players, because it’s the vision of the club, we need to produce and sell. We can work and have the opportunity to sell players at the end of the season or in January. It’s a success of ours, TS Galaxy has produced many players in this league. Mike Sebelebele, now, when we spoke before, I said if there’s someone who deserves it, it’s him. He’s shown with Bafana Bafana now, he’s shown with us many times that he has the ability and skills to be on the top. I think he needs to make the next step at his new club; he had a contract, he could easily have stayed another four years with us. But the club has decided to sell him to give him an opportunity to change his life, which I am so happy about.

LK: For those who don't know him, what does Mike bring to the football pitch?

AB: He's been here for five years at this club, in the DDC team, someone recognised him in that time to call him to train for the first team. He had something special, which many players don't have. With the ball, he is unpredictable; you never know what he can do, he has skills. He is fast with the ball, not without the ball. With the ball, he is so fast and he can create havoc in the box. You can always expect something special in the box. Defensively, he is perfect; he can do many good things when he defends. How he's played in the last season, the last three years, middle block, when we want to stay compact, stay close in defence, is good. And then on counterattacks also...

LK: So, he's that versatile player who can help you switch from the 4-4-2, to 4-3-3, 4-3-2-1 during the game?

AB: Yes, he can play right-back, on the wing we use him in some tough games against strong opponents, especially when we needed to stop [Relebohile] Mofokeng, I think the only player who can play 1v1 against Mofokeng, it's Mike. I think if he stays healthy, he will have a real opportunity to show his ability, and he can be very good for Orlando Pirates.

LK: What needs to be better this coming season?

AB: We have put some standards in our periodisation, our training sessions, our vision in how we want to play, and it's how we train. Everything we want on game day, we want to see in training. I'm so happy many of the players are staying with us and we've discussed our vision, recognition moments on the field and speak to each other about what needs to be done, communicating with each other. This means we can have success as we have 70% of our players to recognise our vision, follow our vision. Our job now is to just improve our new players, to make them understand how we want to play. And [cognitive] understanding of match-related situations. We want to have a strong team, not strong individuals; a strong team always beats individual players.

LK: One eye on Sekhukhune already for MTN8?

AB: Yeah, we're already thinking of that game, it's a great opportunity for us for the first time to cross the next round, it will be a good game. We always play good games in that beautiful stadium. They are a team who want to play football, with structure, and it's always nice to go there to fight and we always get something against Sekhukhune.



“THE CHAIRMAN IS NOT JUST THINKING ABOUT HIMSELF, BUT THINKING ABOUT EVERYONE WHO WORKS HERE. FOR ME, IT’S IMPORTANT HE THINKS LIKE THAT AND TO HAVE A VISION.”

LK: Look, from the outside, media and fans, it seems like there's uncertainty. But for those of you inside, you know better than us. Has the uncertainty about the club unsettled you guys or have you just known it's business as usual? There's been a lot of speculation about a potential club sale.

AB: We always focus on what we need to do. We need to be perfect, yes, we read things in the media sometimes, about someone trying to buy the status. The club sells so many players, it will be difficult to survive. Sometimes, yes - it can be difficult or tough to read. But we have full intentions on what we need to do. Obviously, the club chairman does not want to sell, obviously, we sold players that we needed to sell. Now we just put full attention on preparing our team for the next season.

LK: So the Chairman has allayed fears, there are no concerns?

AB: Yes, we talk every day, we analyse everything. We talk about players, preparation, pre-season, and he said to me straight, he doesn't want to sell the club. It's more than a football club; we represent one big province. We want to make sure we help many players, as we have done, and we want to continue this in the future to just change lives. And there are so many people who work in this club; life is not easy. The Chairman is not just thinking about himself, but thinking about everyone who works here. For me, it's important he thinks like that and to have a vision. Every year it's the next step, to make TS Galaxy a better club than last year.

LK: Thank you very much, coach.

AB: I appreciate it.



CAPE INTERN TO EREDIVISIE COACH

By Rob Delport

Now and then, you come across a story that beautifully illustrates just how small the world truly is — a reminder that dreams, hard work, and ambition can carry you to the most unexpected places.

Consider the journey of Ruben den Uil. At 34 years old, he may not yet be a household name in global football circles, but he’s already achieved something remarkable: in his very first appointment as head coach of a senior team, he led Excelsior Rotterdam to promotion to the Dutch Eredivisie.

Excelsior themselves might not be among the most famous of the Netherlands’ footballing giants, yet they carry a quiet tradition of resilience and character. South African fans might even recall a link from years past: both Kermit Erasmus and Kamohelo Mokotjo, as promising young talents from Feyenoord’s system, spent time on loan at Excelsior around 15 years ago, gaining the experience that would shape their careers.

But the truly intriguing South African connection in this story isn’t those well-known players. Instead, it’s den Uil himself.

A little over a decade ago, long before taking his place on the touchline in Rotterdam, he was a young aspiring coach looking for experience and perspective. That quest took him far from home – to Cape Town, where he spent nearly a year as an intern at Ajax Cape Town.

“When I was there, I was actually assisting Corné Groenendijk, who was the Head of Youth, and Jan Pruijn, who was Head of Scouting,” den Uil tells iDiski Times.

“I was helping them out, based also on my study, to help a bit on the policy side, to help with recruiting youth scouts

and organising first touch programs in the neighbourhoods.

“But also assisting all the coaches on the pitch, a few weeks with U12, a few weeks with U13, up until the U19s. So ja, based on my coaching experience, I was there on the pitch as an extra assistant coach for all the youth coaches, and to relate a bit with the coaches and to interact with them about how they were doing things.

“And on a policy basis, I was helping the head of youth and the head of scouting with also organising things like trials or first touch programs, so that there was a great experience and out of that, then you also get to know all the players of the academy. So, from Liam Bern, I think, who was back then in U12, but also the players who were a bit older and were already stepping up towards the first team and were maybe one or two years away from the first team.”

Den Uil openly credits the South African chapter as having a profound influence on his development as a coach. Working closely with youth players in an environment famed for nurturing raw talent taught him invaluable lessons about player development, adaptability, and the human side of coaching.

He’s spoken of how those months in Cape Town helped shape his philosophy and prepared him for the challenges of leading a professional side.

“For me, I think if I would define one of the most crucial moments or periods in my life, that has definitely been the nine months that I was in Cape Town,” den Uil recalls.

“Because, ja, when you are 22 and you go to the other side of the world, and especially when you come from a Western country, a first world country, where there is hardly any poverty, and you come to a country like South Africa,



and in a city like Cape Town, and where there is poverty, obviously, and you can see that with your own eyes. But you also experience it because you teach, you train, you help, but you also learn from people around you, coaches and players alike, who are living daily in poverty circumstances.

“Ja, that period in my life has impacted me, I think, maybe the most, up until the point that I’m now here. And for me, it had a massive impact on my vision as well.

“Sometimes you read these quotes about leadership, making the most of today, or blah, blah, blah, but when you really see what the opportunities are that you have in comparison to the opportunities that many others, like the ones who are living in poverty in Cape Town, don’t have, or for those it might be less common to have that. Ja, then you realise it.”

It’s a testament to how interconnected football can be: a young Dutch coach travels to South Africa to learn his craft, and years later, he applies those lessons to achieve promotion back home.

In stories like these, we’re reminded not just of football’s global reach, but of its power to build unexpected bridges between people and places — a shared language of dreams and ambition that truly knows no borders.

Although den Uil may still seem young by football standards, at Excelsior, he’s actually one of the senior figures. The club prides itself on having one of the youngest technical staffs in the Netherlands, fostering fresh ideas and innovation. The club’s Technical Director, Niels van Duinen, is also in his thirties, as is the club’s CEO, Daan Bovenberg. Their commitment to youth is evident not just off the pitch but on it too, with a squad boasting an impressive average age of around 21, highlighting their belief in developing and trusting young talent.

“We like to think a little out of the box,” den Uil said, “But also due to the fact that we need to do that.

“So in the Eredivisie, we are the club with the smallest budget. So we like to give people a chance as well in the squad, but also, when it comes to the staff.

“So our General Director is the

“FOR ME, I THINK IF I WOULD DEFINE ONE OF THE MOST CRUCIAL MOMENTS OR PERIODS IN MY LIFE, THAT HAS DEFINITELY BEEN THE NINE MONTHS THAT I WAS IN CAPE TOWN.”

youngest in the Netherlands, our Technical Director, also myself. So ja, I think this is also a bit in the DNA of the club. It’s not a goal in itself, but we try to give young people – who are talented, but above all, who are motivated and gritty to make the most out of it – a chance and try to propel and to perform.”

Den Uil’s story serves as an inspiration for all young coaches, proving that even when age is seen as a disadvantage, success is still possible through hard work and perseverance. It’s a powerful reminder that true achievement comes from staying dedicated, refusing to give up, and ultimately finding the place that truly values what you have to offer.

“That period in Cape Town really shaped my vision,” den Uil concluded, “If it comes to leadership vision, if it comes to how I look towards the world, not only how I coach, but also how I am, what my core values are.

“If there is a platform to advise people, I would highly recommend people to go abroad and to get to know a different culture that can help shape, literally, your identity.

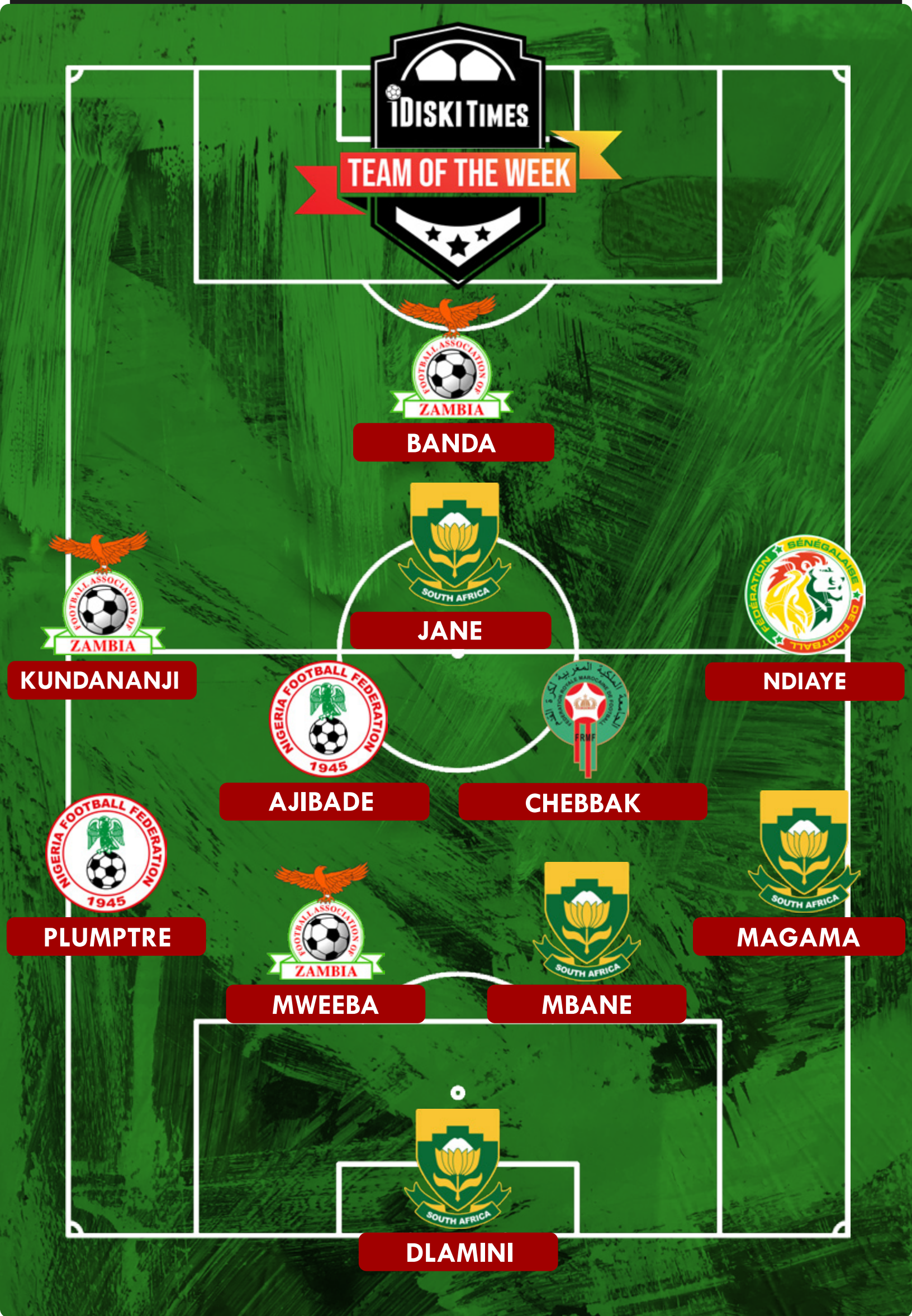
“So I’m very grateful for the period that I’ve had at Ajax Cape Town, for the opportunity, but also for the people.

“And honestly, for me, it has always been a dream to come back one day to South Africa, to Cape Town, because I really love the people.

“It has been more of a dream than becoming head coach at a professional club in the Netherlands. That’s a pretty funny dream, actually.”

Den Uil’s story is also a gentle reminder to everyone at a club: be nice to the intern – you never know if they’ll be the one calling the shots a few years down the line.

IDISKI TIMES' WAFCON24 BEST XI OF GROUP STAGES



ACE OF THE WEEK:
ANDILE DLAMINI

This week's iDiski Times Ace of the Week is Andile Dlamini, the Banyana Banyana goalkeeper whose heroics helped secure a historic win over Senegal in the WAFCON semi-finals. Dlamini kept her third clean sheet of the tournament and then stepped up in the penalty shootout, making two crucial saves to help South Africa triumph 4-1. It marked Banyana's first-ever penalty shootout victory in WAFCON history. Her composure and shot-stopping ability were key as the defending champions booked their place in the final four, where they will now face fierce rivals Nigeria. With performances like this, Dlamini continues to prove why she's one of the continent's top goalkeepers.



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 Jean-Pierre Farrugia (Part 1)

This week, we have the great pleasure of speaking to my former colleague and friend JP Farrugia. JP is the Head of Youth at the academy of Stellenbosch FC, where he also serves as the U18 coach. In this role, JP won the Engen national championship with his team in 2023, as well as defending his regional championship in 2024 and reaching the national final once again. Before Stellenbosch FC, JP was a crucial member of the Ubuntu Football Academy as well as an assistant coach of the Ubuntu Cape Town FC in the NFD and later in the ABC. We talk to JP about various aspects and learnings in his coaching journey, as well as player development in the South African context.

JP, thank you for your time. Can you briefly tell us about your background? Both as a player and later as a coach, your different clubs and roles, as well as where you are currently.

JPF: Like many young aspiring footballers, my desire was to play professionally. I dedicated years to pursuing that goal, coming very close through numerous trials—but ultimately, it did not work out.

The pinnacle of my playing career came during my time at Mitchell’s Plain Utd under Santos FC ownership, from around 2007 to 2012. I spent five seasons competing with them in the ABC league. It was a consistently strong team that became a stepping stone for young talent into the professional game. The highlight for me was winning the ABC league, touring with Santos to India and playing with and guiding some of the Cape’s top talent at the time.

Although my playing career didn’t reach the heights I had hoped for, it was at Santos where I transitioned into coaching. The club offered me my first opportunity, allowing me to take on the Under-11 coaching role. I spent four formative years there, learning the fundamentals of coaching and developing my understanding of the game from a different perspective.

Following Santos, I moved on to ASD, a football club then based in Claremont, Cape Town. In my second season, we achieved the incredible by winning the Engen Under-17 tournament. That same year marked the introduction of the National Tournament, and we had the honour of being among the first teams to participate.

After two seasons at ASD, I joined Ubuntu Football Academy, where I spent nearly seven years in various capacities. I coached the Under-17 and Under-18 teams and acted as assistant coach to the club’s NFD side for two seasons—although results on the field during that period were not as successful as we had hoped. Beyond coaching, I was involved in the academic side as both a full-time teacher and part-time tutor. I also co-developed their school that today remains a successful pillar of the club, and I’m proud of the role I played in its establishment.

Currently, I serve as the Head of Youth and Under-18 Coach at Stellenbosch Football Club. I also assist with the club’s Under-21 DDC team. I’ve been fortunate to be part of several recent successes, including DDC Diski league honours, Next-Gen tournament successes and 2 time Engen regional winners

1 time National winners.

Returning to the professional football environment has been an incredible learning experience. While I’m proud of the journey so far, I know there’s still much more to learn. I remain committed to growing and contributing to a club that is fully focused on moving forward with ambition, purpose, and excellence.

JP: The follow up to this would be about learnings along the way. What were your major lessons in each of your coaching positions that you apply now in your daily work?

JPF: My coaching journey has been shaped by the environments I’ve worked in, the mentors I’ve learned from, and the evolution of the game itself. Each stage has provided invaluable lessons that continue to inform my philosophy and practice today.

As mentioned before, my first opportunity in coaching came at Santos FC. It was a formative period for me, one where I made the most of the time I had during the day to immerse myself in the craft. I read extensively, studied training methodologies, watched countless hours of coaching videos, and observed the first team closely during their sessions and matches. This was also the era of Pep Guardiola’s Barcelona—a team that influenced modern football with its fluid, collective style of play. Their philosophy resonated with me deeply. It was not just “beautiful” football; it was a model that, I believed, could be adapted effectively at the youth level, particularly for under-11s. The all-inclusive nature of their approach, where every player participated in both attack and defence, inspired the way I began to think about training and player development.

At ASD, I was fortunate to be albeit, briefly, guided by the late Roald Poulsen—a Danish Champions League coach whose standards and attention to detail left a lasting impression. From him, I gained a deeper appreciation for the technical aspects of the game. Roald’s insistence on technical excellence helped me understand that success at the highest level is nearly impossible without technical precision.

Ubuntu Football Academy was perhaps the most transformative chapter of my coaching journey. It was there that I encountered a radically different way of thinking, thanks



largely to Moritz Kossmann—someone I now consider a close colleague and mentor. Moritz introduced us to modern coaching methodologies, particularly constraint-led approaches and principle-based sessions that challenged many of our traditional views. Initially, it was a difficult adjustment. But over time, I came to appreciate how effective and player-centred this method could be. It reshaped my approach to designing training sessions and helped me understand how to manipulate game scenarios to guide player development more deliberately. It taught me to coach with greater intention—aligned with tactical principles while remaining flexible and creative.

Now at Stellenbosch FC, I’ve entered a space where professionalism is not only expected but embodied daily. This environment has reinforced the importance of discipline, mental and physical preparation, and professional conduct—traits that are vital for any player who hopes to sustain a career in football. I’ve learned that success at the professional level often depends on more than just talent or tactical understanding. It requires resilience, consistency, and a commitment to standards that transcend the game itself. These lessons are difficult to teach outside of a professional setting, but within a club like Stellenbosch, where the senior team sets the tone, they become part of the culture. Lastly, the club has led me to see that there is not only one way to play the game of football, or that only one way is “attractive.” This may not sit well with many people, but it has helped me understand how to adapt my coaching style to suit the characteristics of the environment.

JP: Thirdly, when we talk about youth development in the South African context, you have extensive experience, having played a key role in the development of players such as Rushine de Reuck, Jesse Donn, the late Luke Fleurs or lately Tylon Smith, who has just transferred to English Championship side QPR. In your opinion, what are some of the key field training aspects that coaches need to apply in the South African context?

JPF: This is an interesting and multi-faceted topic, one that doesn’t lend itself to a single answer. However, based on my coaching experience across various levels in South Africa, I can share a few key considerations that may help guide thinking and practice when it comes to on-field training in our unique context.

1. Never Underestimate South African Players

There’s a persistent misconception in some coaching circles that South African players struggle to grasp tactical concepts, rules-based sessions, or constraint-led activities due to perceived academic or socio-economic limitations. I strongly challenge that notion. Too often, coaches simplify their training, assuming players won’t be able to comprehend more sophisticated ideas.

In my experience, and that of colleagues like Moritz Kossmann, this approach significantly underestimates the intelligence and capacity

of our players. When concepts are taught intentionally and progressively, players—regardless of background—can and do grasp highly complex tactical principles. I’ve witnessed players thrive in exercises that some would label too abstract or “too European.” The issue isn’t ability—it’s how information is delivered.

We must move away from associating academic challenges with footballing limitations. This shift in mindset can open the door to deeper learning and unlock greater tactical intelligence among our players.

2. Teaching the Application of Skill

One of South African football’s undeniable strengths is the natural technical flair and skill that many players possess. There is a rich culture of individual expression, creativity, and improvisation that is difficult to replicate. However, this flair often exists in isolation—without the tactical context or decision-making framework to make it consistently effective.

A crucial coaching responsibility, then, is to help players understand when, how, and why to use their skills. It’s about guiding them to solve football problems using their natural tools and helping them apply their abilities in a way that contributes to the team’s objectives. This has been a key lesson in my own development—realising that elite talent doesn’t always need to be changed, but rather understood and shaped with purpose.

3. Emphasising Competition and Intensity in Training

One of the most important training principles, especially in our context, is the need to maintain a consistently high level of competition and intensity. South African players often train in bursts—switching between high-energy sessions and others that lack focus or urgency. This inconsistency can create gaps in development and preparation.

Players need to be conditioned to train under match-like intensity, day in and day out. High-intensity training not only prepares them physically but also sharpens decision-making, concentration, and execution under pressure. The closer training replicates real match conditions—or even exceeds them—the more comfortable and confident players become in competitive matches.

Part of this is about mindset. There’s a common perception among young players that talent alone is a golden ticket—a belief that football is a reward rather than a responsibility. As coaches, we must continuously reinforce that professionalism is earned through daily effort, not occasional brilliance. Competition and intensity should be non-negotiables in every session, regardless of the match ahead or the opponent involved. The hope is that we create consistent, sustainable professionals, not ones that choose their moments or only show up on occasion.

We will carry on the conversation with JP in the next edition, so don’t miss it.



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