



DITHEJANE ON CHIEFS EXIT, GALAXY RISE & LIGUE 1 DREAMS



TWO PSL CLUBS WANT FORMER DOWNS DEFENDER COETZEE



SHALULILE UPDATE AFTER TUNIS MOVE COLLAPSED



MAJORO ON MTN8 FINAL & SHALULILE RECORD



THE LAST 18 YPOTS WINNERS - WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

THE DRAWING BOARD WITH MORITZ KOSSMANN & ACE OF THE WEEK

QUICK HOW TO GUIDE

(BUTTON EXAMPLES)

THIS SHOWS YOU WHICH PAGE YOU ARE CURRENTLY READING

ITEM NAME

CLICK THIS BUTTON TO GO BACK TO THE HOME PAGE

CLICK TO GO TO HOME

TAKES YOU TO THE PREVIOUS PAGE

< CLICK TO GO BACK

TAKES YOU TO THE NEXT PAGE

CLICK TO GO NEXT >

THESE BUTTONS ARE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PAGE.

CLICKING EACH OF THESE BUTTONS TAKES YOU OUT OF THIS E-PAPER, DIRECTLY TO THE WEBSITE OR SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM



THE ALL-NEW TOYOTA STARLET CROSS

OWN IT



CLICK THE STORY YOU WANT TO READ. REMEMBER,
YOU CAN COME BACK TO THIS PAGE BY CLICKING
THE BUTTON THAT SAYS “CLICK TO GO BACK HOME”
AT THE TOP RIGHT OF EACH PAGE

HOME PAGE



RUMOURS
LATEST FROM THE RUMOUR MILL



IDISKI TV
LATEST FROM IDISKI TV



BENSON MHLONGO
EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW



LEHLOHONOLO MAJORO
EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW



PLAYER POWER
FEATURE



SHALULILE SAGA OVER
NEWS



PUSO DITHEJANE
EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW



RELE’S CHALLENGE
FEATURE



TEAM OF THE WEEK
& ACE OF THE WEEK



TACTICS CORNER
THE DRAWING BOARD

CLICK A BUTTON BELOW TO GO TO OUR WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA



RIVALDO IN PSL TUG OF WAR?

Rivaldo Coetzee has reportedly been approached by Golden Arrows and Sekhukhune United, as he looks to get back into the game after his exit at Mamelodi Sundowns. Former Sundowns coach Manqoba Mngqithi has made no secret of his desire to reunite with the talented utility player who is capable of playing in defence and midfield. It remains to be seen where he ends up, as sources confirmed a decision is imminent for the former Ajax Cape Town star, who has also said to have been considered by Kaizer Chiefs in recent weeks.



ZINDOGA RECEIVES GALLANTS CLEARANCE

TS Galaxy have finally completed the signing of Zimbabwe forward Junior Zindoga after a week of speculation. Gallants and Galaxy were in dispute over his reported option, but it appears the issue has now been sorted out, paving the way for the talented forward to officially be a Rockets player. He's received his paperwork this week, but it's uncertain when he will be able to be registered, as the FIFA ban that's plagued the side at the start of this season is not officially cleared yet.



NTSUNDWANA RESURFACES AT CHIPPA

Somila Ntsundwana is back at Chippa United after being told to leave the squad by former head coach Sinethemba Badela. The towering striker, along with Eric Mbangossoum, were both signed by the club in the off-season but were informed they are not part of the coach's plans shortly after. But after the exit of Badela, the former Richards Bay forward has returned to the club, while they are also said to be finalising a potential move for Thabiso Kutumela.



DISCLAIMER. THE RUMOURS IN THE MILL HAVE BEEN REPORTED TO IDISKI TIMES BY SOURCES WITHIN THE FOOTBALL COMMUNITY AND LIKE WITH ANY HEARSAY MAY BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

BET ON ALL THE LEAGUES AT

WORLD

SPORTS BETTING

WORLD SPORTS BETTING

BET NOW!

WORLD SPORTS BETTING

WORLD SPORTS BETTING

Operator Licensed by the Gambling and Racing Board. No person under the age of 18 years permitted to gamble. National Responsible Gambling Program Toll Free Counselling Line 0800 066 008 or via Whatsapp HELP to 076 675 0710. Winners know when to stop.



[CLICK TO GO HOME](#)



OLDMUTUAL

INVEST IN MY FUTURE
LIKE YOU INVEST IN
BEDTIME STORIES.



[LEARN MORE](#)

FSP & Ins. Ts & Cs.

[< CLICK TO GO BACK](#)

[CLICK TO GO NEXT >](#)



SHALULILE MOVE FALLS THROUGH, SAGA OVER WITH SUNDOWNS

Mamelodi Sundowns striker Peter Shalulile looks set to remain at the club after his proposed move is believed to have fallen through in recent weeks.

The legendary striker, who recently equalled the Premier Soccer League (PSL) goalscoring record by reaching the 129 goal mark, which was held by Siyabonga Nomvethe, looked poised to be ending his time at Sundowns.

He bid his goodbyes to the squad, and a video was recorded for his eventual departure, with talks at an advanced stage with Esperance Sportive de Tunis, while Al Hilal Sudan and Al Ittihad of Libya were also among the clubs keen on his services.

However, sources have confirmed the deal with Esperance, where Sundowns were open to the idea of luring Yan Sasse to Chloorkop, fell through, as neither player eventually agreed on the respective moves.

Shalulile then returned back to training after a brief time away from the club, and has since been reintegrated into the squad, where he will likely remain beyond the end of the current transfer window.

It marks another twist in his future at Sundowns, where the player had fallen down the pecking order since the arrival of Iqraam Rayners from Stellenbosch.

DISCLAIMER. THE RUMOURS IN THE MILL HAVE BEEN REPORTED TO IDISKI TIMES BY SOURCES WITHIN THE FOOTBALL COMMUNITY AND LIKE WITH ANY HEARSAY MAY BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE



IDISKITIMES
EYETHU SONKE

FOLLOW OUR CHANNEL!

GET THE LATEST BREAKING
NEWS, MATCH UPDATES AND A
WHOLE LOT MORE!

CLICK HERE!!





GO TO IDISKITV



‘THE FOOTBALL GODS HAVE BLESSED US WITH A REPEAT’

Defending champions Orlando Pirates and Stellenbosch FC will once again face each other in next month’s MTN8 Final, after they got past Mamelodi Sundowns and Sekhukhune United, respectively, in the two-legged semi-final ties.

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.

Make sure you subscribe for free on YouTube, and click the bell icon to get notified as soon as new videos are released.

Orlando Pirates v Stellenbosch Final - Nkululeko Nkewu

“Ladies and gentlemen, we have a repeat of last year’s MTN8 final!

“Stellenbosch vs Orlando Pirates once

again. I’m excited that the football Gods have blessed us with a repeat.

“Last year’s MTN8 Final was a grave miscarriage of justice. It was a daylight robbery, captured live on full HD television.

“That’s why it seems poetic that these two clubs will lock horns again in the final of the same competition, most likely, at the same stadium.

“Orlando Pirates beat Mamelodi Sundowns on penalties. Stellenbosch beat Sekhukhune United on aggregate score.

“Well done to both sides for giving themselves and their fans the chance to win the first trophy of the season.

“If Orlando Pirates wins the MTN8 again, it will seal one of the most dominant eras by a single club in a specific competition and that needs to be applauded.”





‘VELEBAYI REMINDS ME OF TEENAGE DLADLA’

Former Orlando Pirates and Mamelodi Sundowns hard man BENSON MHLONGO built his reputation on crunching tackles and an uncompromising style of play. And true to form, that same no-nonsense attitude comes through when he speaks. In a candid sit-down with iDiski Times senior writer MATSHELANE MAMABOLO, the 45-year-old doesn't mince his words as he weighs in on the current state of his former clubs, Pirates and Sundowns. Mhlongo also offers intriguing insight into Kaizer Chiefs' newest recruits, Asanele Velebayi and Luke Baartman – young talents he knows well from his stint as Ernst Middendorp's right-hand man at Cape Town Spurs.

MATSHELANE MAMABOLO: Benson, just to start with, Chiefs have signed the two young players from Cape Town Spurs, Asanele Velebayi and Luke Baartman. You coached them during your short stint as assistant to Ernst Middendorp. Are they good signings for Chiefs?

BENSON MHLONGO: Velebayi is a good player. He is still young and is going to go places. I just think too much responsibility was put on his shoulders, a little too early at Spurs, but he tried his best, that boy. But he's an exciting player – we are talking about an Arthur Zwane. When Chiefs signed that player, I thought maybe they were trying to bring back the element of 10111 to their team. He reminds me of the Chiefs legend from East Rand, Teenage Dladla – ja, he's got that element of Teenage because he's good on his feet and very quick. When you go to Luke [Baartman], we are talking about Ace Khuse. He's a combination of Ace Khuse and Jabu Pule. He's very smart and intelligent. The only thing is that you have to understand him. He doesn't put much effort into training, because whatever he does, it's very calculated. Yet come the day of the match, he finds solutions – easily. So, Chiefs have made good signings with those boys. They must just protect them.

MM: Ja, that's especially because it's a big club. You've played at the highest level. You know the pressure that comes with playing for those clubs.

BM: In terms of pressure, I don't think the boys will struggle because they know what they want. Chiefs must just use them properly.

MM: That's good. I needed to get that because I know you worked with them. Now let's talk about you. You don't coach anymore. Why's that?

BM: Let's not say I don't coach anymore. Every human being, every parent, is a coach. When we exchange experiences,

it's coaching each other. So I'll always coach. The best way to put it is to say I am not a coach at a football club. But why did I stop a little bit in football? The recent club I worked with was Cape Town Spurs. You know, I had an incident where there's this young boy who didn't

“VELEBAYI REMINDS ME OF THE CHIEFS LEGEND FROM EAST RAND, TEENAGE DLADLA – JA, HE'S GOT THAT ELEMENT OF TEENAGE BECAUSE HE'S GOOD ON HIS FEET AND VERY QUICK.”





come to training because he doesn't feel he's been looked at, been given an opportunity, and he's very talented, but lazy a little bit. And now the team is in a difficult situation. We need fighters. He's talented, but he doesn't have that element of being ruthless, you know, grinding the points. So he didn't come to training. I found him, and he said, when he was about to come to training in the morning, they took his phone and stabbed him. I said, 'Okay, fine. Can you send me a picture?' Send me a picture, and you can see that picture now. Just took a razor to his back, and then he cut himself just so I said, 'Okay, fine'. But luckily enough, the chairman understood the boy, because he came from development, and he gave me an opportunity to engage with the boy, so I did call the boy in with his elder, and we talked about this. We squash away the robbery part. That's fine. I understand, right? Let's talk about you. What's happening? And he said, I've been developed, but now I'm in the PSL. I don't think you care much about me as a coaching staff, and that hurts. And now I must go back and give a report, see that my report says this boy's career must end now, or I must protect him and give him a second chance. So I was conflicted between telling the truth and lying, because I'm a person who says it's better to deal with the truth, because the solution will be permanent. Dealing with lies, it will resurface. And then we go back to the same issue. I said, 'No! I have to find myself. I think this coaching thing is taking me in the wrong way as a human being'. So that's why I stopped. There were just too many incidents that got me to rethink my involvement. We take the game so seriously, we forget about the human being. And I'm a human being.

MM: I get you. Now let's talk about football. The new season has started, and in the build-up, the talk was all about how Orlando Pirates were going to challenge or even stop Mamelodi Sundowns from winning

“THE TEAM HAS GOT COMPLICATED PLAYERS. YOU NEED SOMEONE TO TAKE CARE OF MOFOKENG AND MBOKAZI. AS MUCH AS THEY ARE COMING UP, YOU NEED SOMEONE TO TAKE CARE OF THEM.”

a ninth successive championship. They didn't have a good start as they lost two matches, but then won their third. What have you made of their start under a new coach and a lot of new signings?

BM: I look at the team, and I feel like in goals we are okay, we have experience. At right-back, I don't know. Our centre-backs, I don't know...

MM: But people are raving about Mbekezeli Mbokazi.

BM: Ja, we're raving, but he's still young. When he conceded in the CAF [Champions League semi-final against Pyramids FC], an element of inexperience showed where a player was in between them. At left-back, okay, we still have [Deon] Hotto. But is he talkative? Does he understand our culture? Can he unite and solve the change-room problems? There's a question mark there. In the middle, they are all still young. Attack, there are young players. [Oswin] Appollis is finding his feet. My view is, they are going back to what they did before they signed our group with the likes of Moeneeb [Josephs] and Terminator [Dikgang Mabalane]. We all had





years of experience in the PSL before we joined Pirates. We knew what we had to do, what was required from us.

MM: But the Pirates fans are excited by this squad. Am I getting you right, though? Are you saying the team is too young, inexperienced and needs more senior players?

BM: The team has got complicated players. You need someone to take care of Mofokeng and Mbokazi. As much as they are coming up, you need someone to take care of them. They should not be caught wanting to do things that they're not supposed to do off the field. That's very crucial. You become famous overnight, and these ones are big already. A lot of scammers will come to their doorsteps with ladies and invitations to nightclubs where everything is for free. That's what happens. You get things for free, and you get tempted to enjoy the outside life. But now, if you have someone within – as a teammate – who has got capabilities of holding and nurturing these boys, they'll be afraid to do those things.

MM: Do you feel that in the current squad, there isn't somebody that is senior or experienced to mentor these young ones?

BM: [Innocent] Maela was an example to these boys – the way he handled himself, the way he did things, and they could copy him. But now he's gone. [Tapelo] Xoki, I don't know what's happening. You need a character in order for Pirates to gel because it is a very big club. You become a star overnight when you join Pirates. So you need somebody within the team who will show them that, even if you are a star, this is how you handle yourself. That character is very important. You go back to when they won in 1995,

**“THE WHEELS
ARE COMING
OFF. NOW
EVERYONE
CAN COMPETE
WITH
SUNDOWNS.”**

they had the likes of John Moeti, whose calmness on its own calms other characters that are hyper. You need that – that Rooney character, when you look at him, his aura says calm down, focus on your work. You need such players in the team to handle Pirates. But what you currently have are players who are all about nice limelight and skills. It's gonna get to them.

MM: I suppose you've been inside, and you know that because from the outside, like I said, the whole country is excited. Just about everybody believes this is the kind of team that can challenge. The talent is there. But you are saying they don't have a leader.

BM: They don't have that character, unfortunately. They have soft characters.

MM: But what about Nkosinathi Sibisi? I mean, he's the main captain.

BM: When we talk about character, we talk about the late Nelson Mandela, Kgalema Motlanthe, versus the current president. That character is something; you can feel it. You need someone who has an aura. Look at the chairman of the club. You can feel him. That character must transfer to the pitch. So they need someone who can handle the





diversity and the different atmosphere of Pirates. Even the Pirates supporters are different. Their character is more of the mafia’s style of leadership. They are leaders in their own right in their community.

MM: If you don’t have that in the team you at least need a coach who has that aura. But I don’t get that from Abdeslam Ouaddou. What do you make of him?

BM: *[Sighs]* I don’t feel that he’s got that aura. You look at the previous coach, and he had Xoki and Maela. Let’s go back [to their previous captain, Siyabonga] Sangweni. He didn’t need to talk. On his own, you just get in line. Then you go to [Kosta] Papic’s squad, who did they have? No one really, and this team is similar to that one. Pirates are a spiritual team? Once you play for it, you will understand – it’s a spiritual team. So to be a spiritual leader, you must have character.

MM: So how is that lack of character going to impact their season? They don’t look like they will sign anymore before the transfer window closes. So they will go into this season without a leader who will mentor the young ones.

BM: They will excite us, but where it matters most, it’s gonna bite them. That’s how they lost the league last time around. Yes, you can play, but when you have to win, they will fail. It happened with the squad that Senzo [Meyiwa] captained. When we left, they were alone.

MM: You played for Sundowns as well. They’ve been dominating South Africa for years – the league in particular – and a lot of people believe

“WHEN YOU GO TO LUKE [BAARTMAN], WE ARE TALKING ABOUT ACE KHUSE. HE’S A COMBINATION OF ACE KHUSE AND JABU PULE. HE’S VERY SMART AND INTELLIGENT.”

they will win a ninth successive title. Some doubt it will happen, given the impending loss of Lucas Ribeiro and possibly Khuliso Mudau. But the other day Peter Shalulile scored that record-equaling goal, and it looks like they are going to do well. What’s your take on Sundowns? Can they dominate again? Is there anyone who can challenge them?

BM: The wheels are coming off. Now everyone can compete with Sundowns. I think that’s what is happening. I think football now is played off the field, and people are realising that the only way to beat Sundowns is to cripple them – to find offers for those good players and ignite them to want to leave. So there’s something happening behind the scenes, I think. Still, I think it’s going to take another two seasons to beat them because these other big teams, Chiefs and Pirates, instead of keeping the squad that’s been competing with Sundowns, they are building again. They are giving Sundowns a chance, and they are missing the opportunity. And then these ones [Sundowns] will rebuild quicker.

MM: Interesting. Thanks so much Benson.





MAJOR ON MTN8 FINALISTS & SHALULILE RECORD

This past weekend, Orlando Pirates and Stellenbosch FC secured their places in this season's MTN8 final after seeing off Mamelodi Sundowns and Sekhukhune United over two semi-final legs, respectively. This is a repeat of last season's final, where Pirates emerged victors for the third time in a row. The game scheduled for September 13th is also LEHLOHONOLO MAJORO's dream final as 'Major' hoped that Stellies would get the chance to get some revenge over Pirates following the controversies of last year's final at the Moses Mabhida Stadium.

Majoro spoke to iDiski Times writer LETHABO KGANYAGO just before the semi-finals second leg ties about his impressions on the tournament so far, why Pirates have expectations from their new coach, who has not enjoyed the best starts to the current campaign. The former Pirates target man also shared his joy for Peter Shalulile, who broke Siyabonga Nomvethe's all-time scoring record last week, and why he thinks there will be competition from other forwards like Bradley Grobler, with one of them possibly reaching the 20-goal mark, among other things.

Lethabo Kganyago: Major, we always appreciate your time. How have the MTN8 trophy tours been?

Lehlohonolo Majoro: I must say it has been very nice. In Limpopo, we're welcomed by warmth and the heat. It's good because I can finally wear my shorts now instead of wearing track pants every day. But other than that, we've travelled, tried to cover as many towns as possible, even here in Limpopo province. We also got an opportunity



"STELLENBOSCH HAVE SOLD, I THINK, 13 PLAYERS AND WITH THAT BEING SAID, THEY STILL PRODUCE PLAYERS THAT ADD VALUE."

to go and donate the dream bags that MTN also tries by all means to touch lives wherever we go, by giving back. The reason we give back those dream bags that have soccer kits and netball kits is because we want kids to have hope, especially in places where it is considered less fortunate in terms of opportunities being scarce. So it has been a joyful journey so far.

LK: What has impressed you so far in the MTN8 this season?

LM: From the beginning of the tournament, I've been impressed by the number of goals that have been scored by the teams, because we know - what's football without goals. People come to the game to support and not



**Shoot your shot
for R1 million**





only support their team, but also to enjoy the match on the day. So with them enjoying the game, with them seeing goals, has really impressed me. And having seen two sold outs in the mix of that really impressed me to show that people were longing for football. And now that football is back, they're showcasing the love for football. The reason I said goals is also because we have goals for charity, which is part and parcel of giving back to the needy.. So we have over R400,000 in the kitty box, so we want to break the MTN bank.

LK: For Steve Barker, he's come so close, so many times in the last few seasons. Would winning this cup be the beginning of that chapter for Stellies to spoil the party for the big dogs?

LM: Let me tell you about Steve Barker because I must give credit to him. For the past four or five seasons, they have been doing well, and because I'm a lover of football, I did a bit of research, and I overheard that they had a five-year plan. And their five-year plan was at least to sell three players in those five years, or four and win one trophy. They have done that. They've won a trophy in the past five years. They have sold not only three, but they have sold, I think, 13 players, and with that being said, they still produce players that add value within them. For them to be the only team currently in the MTN8 semi-final that they can say, all we need is just to defend, let us not be scored because we have a 2-0 advantage [from the 1st leg]. We can go all the way. It shows that the coach knows his team, he knows the players, and he gives opportunities to youngsters. And this is the best tournament where new players that have joined teams get launched, get to be seen by the supporters and the football fraternity as a whole. I believe Steve Barker has

"I WAS WITH [RODNEY] RAMAGALELA WHEN WE WERE WATCHING THAT GAME. WE BOTH STOOD UP AND CELEBRATED WHEN PETER SHALULILE SCORED THAT GOAL."

done a tremendous job, and he was a bit unlucky last season when he lost in the final.

LK: I also wanted to touch on the other semi-final, but firstly, last time I spoke to you, you were one of the people who were rooting for Peter Shalulile to reach Nomvethé's record. Let's speak about that now that he has done it.

LM: I was with [Rodney] Ramagalela when we were watching that game [Magesi FC vs Mamelodi Sundowns], and we both stood up and celebrated when he scored that goal. We said, 'Finally, he has done it.' We play football for legacy. We play football, yes, for financial stability. We play football to write history. And seeing one of the players from our generation breaking certain history that has been there, it gives you comfort, because there are heroes out there. Yes, we are all heroes by reaching stages that millions and millions of other people want to reach. But it's how you constantly try to push the ceiling, break boundaries and set new records that will make the upcoming generation do 10 times better in order for them to break those records. Yes, he is a striker, yes, he had his struggles at the beginning of the season, but for him to come in and score, people wouldn't understand, because it takes courage. It takes a person being level-headed to continue and score in that manner.





LK: Now, he's the record holder and still active so can build on it. But then there's Bradley [Grobler] as well, who is not very, very far from him. Do you think that this makes anticipation for a nice season in terms of them going at each other?

LM: Funny enough, it's like they're not even saying that we're going for these records. They are not even saying we are going toe-to-toe with one another. It's them doing what they love, which is scoring goals and that makes it even this exciting for people who are watching from outside. And all I pray for this season is that Bradley plays a full season without getting an injury that will set him back. Because truth be told, he's one of the lethal strikers that we have in South Africa, and I can only imagine, had he not been getting injuries each and every season, how far he would be. And I also commend his courage, his desire to always come back from these minor setbacks and still continue where he left off as if he had never left. That should be encouraging enough for the youngsters, and not only youngsters, but also for those who are also having PSL contracts, playing on the higher level, that we also have to push ourselves to reach a certain level.

LK: Is this also a season where you see, perhaps, somebody getting 20 goals? Peter said after getting the record that he is targeting 25 goals this season. Is it possible to get to 20 or more?

LM: Anything is possible if you put your mind, body and soul to it, and nothing is impossible until you have pushed yourself. Our thinking in the manner in which we do things is our limitation, but if you can really focus, remember, they say, we manifest certain things that happen into our lives. If you can see that 25, you see it with your soul. You see it with your vision. The only thing that you need to do is to work towards that. Yes, it's not going to be easy because he's not playing against robots. He's playing against defenders who are also saying, 'We know this is what he does; this is how we are supposed to defend to prevent him from scoring these goals.' And that's what makes our football interesting, and that's why our football constantly grows in leaps and bounds every season. I believe if everything goes accordingly for Peter and Bradley, we are bound to see the 15 mark being surpassed by a margin, because



“WE PLAY FOOTBALL TO WRITE HISTORY. AND SEEING ONE OF THE PLAYERS FROM OUR GENERATION BREAKING CERTAIN HISTORY THAT HAS BEEN THERE, IT GIVES YOU COMFORT.”

there's also [Kamogelo] Sebelebele, who has already scored. I've seen him receive his flowers, and that really touched me. Being given flowers by Orlando Pirates supporters, it shows that two games can make a difference only if you exert yourself and play for the badge that is in front, so that the people can remember the name on the back of the jersey.

LK: Let's speak about Pirates. They haven't started the season well, but they have been consistent in this cup. Do you think this Cup can help things to settle for the team and the new coach, who's been criticised already this season?

LM: Obviously, there are expectations that are there, set by the team. There are expectations from supporters based on the previous coach, the Spanish guitar. For each and every change, time is the currency, and sometimes that time you don't have when you are in charge of an institution as big as Orlando Pirates. But I think all is not lost, it is still early in the season. For him to have managed to come back from 1-0 down to equalise has given him a platform to showcase what he has



as a coach. Also, remember players also need to adjust to his philosophy as a coach. They need to understand what it is that he requires from each and every player. There are new players who have raised their hands to say, ‘Coach, I’m available to play,’ because all we see as people who are outside is their players when they play over the weekend, but we are not there when they’re training. The coach, what he sees at training is not what you will know as a supporter, but with that being said, expectations are there, and limitations from certain individuals will always be there. But I believe it’s too soon, and he has the tournament that the team has been winning all this time in front of him. It’s a matter of time before we see if he will be part and parcel of the Orlando Pirates that win the MTN8 four consecutive times.

LK: Head on the block, what was your dream final for this year’s MTN8?

LM: I would say the repeat of last year’s final in Orlando Pirates and Stellenbosch. But there’s that bit of a soft spot to say I would have loved to see Sekhukhune in the final. I think Sekhukhune has done enough to be there, but I guess this is why we call it Wafa Wafa.

LK: So, your dream final is happening then. And lastly, away from MTN8, how do you feel about the return of Siwelele?

LM: I was super excited to hear that Siwelele is back. I was excited to see the supporters coming back, having the team that we all love. I grew up seeing Siwelele or [Bloemfontein] Celtic, the culture of football in the Free State, the love, the supporters,



“THERE ARE EXPECTATIONS THAT ARE THERE, SET BY THE TEAM. THERE ARE EXPECTATIONS FROM SUPPORTERS BASED ON THE PREVIOUS COACH, THE SPANISH GUITAR.”

them showcasing themselves in terms of how they dress, going to the game. Those things, and with their first win of the season, I was like, yeah, it’s back, but at the same time, we must also look at what transpired. The team moving, the name of SuperSport now being changed; it’s another history being taken away.

LK: True. Thank you so much, Major.



It's Wafa
Wafa season



Title Sponsor



A SHIFT IN PLAYER POWER?

By Rob Delpont

There has always been an uneasy feeling that lingers when it comes to the professional football market, the trading of players like commodities, the endless shuffle of contracts, and the way negotiations are handled. It's something that nags not only in South African football, but across almost every footballing nation around the world.

In some countries, the game bends to the weight of national labour laws, with employment regulations shaping how contracts are signed, enforced, and dissolved. But in many others, football seems to exist on its own island, a self-contained world where the usual rules of contractual law are rewritten. It's a parallel legal universe, where the traditions and demands of the sport often trump the protections that ordinary workers would expect in any other profession.

The ethics around these deals are what is most troubling. Too often, we hear stories, whispered long after the fact, of players who were 'manipulated' into signing deals they didn't truly choose, or who had little to no say in their own futures. Now, some of these stories are told like anecdotal yarns and laughed about.

Then there's the familiar tale of contracts being 'mutually terminated' before expiry, a polite euphemism, when in reality it usually means the club decided the player was surplus to requirements and nudged him out.

In recent years, dozens of South African clubs have been hit with transfer registration bans after being found guilty of contractual irregularities, often as a result of players taking their grievances to FIFA. Interestingly, the majority of these disputes have involved international players, who perhaps felt less bound by the politics and relationships within South African football. It does beg the question: how many more cases would we have seen if

local players had also been willing, or empowered, to challenge their clubs?

Too often, South African players simply move on in search of their next job rather than contesting unfair treatment. Agents, too, have sometimes been reluctant to pursue disputes for fear of burning bridges with clubs they need to work with again. The result is a system where many injustices go unchallenged, with only a fraction ever surfacing in official complaints.

The current scenario with Lucas Ribeiro Costa is a timely example. It's a reminder of how one-sided these dynamics usually are. When clubs terminate deals or cut players loose, it's seen as business as usual. But when a player attempts to enforce a termination, suddenly the outrage comes pouring in. "Honour your contract!" cry the fans. "The badge is bigger than the player!" – The double standard is striking.

And this isn't an isolated case. In just the past few months, we've seen multiple disputes where players have been forced to stand up for their rights, albeit in very different contexts. Cape Town Spurs, for instance, became embroiled in controversy when several of their players approached the PSL's Dispute Resolution Chamber after relegation, seeking to be declared free agents once the club slipped into amateur football. That clash once again highlighted the fragile balance between the rights of clubs and those of the individuals who step onto the pitch.

It also highlighted the complex emotionality of fans. Before Asanele Velebayi and Luke Baartman were both unveiled at Kaizer Chiefs, the country's most supported club, we heard cries of 'Free Asa!' and 'Free Luke!'

Of course, when you speak to player representatives, you must expect a degree of bias; they exist to fight the players' corner, after all. But just before the Ribeiro news broke, I was



part of a conversation with Michael Yormark, President of RocNation Sports International, which offered me something different. Yormark’s perspective carries weight precisely because of his extensive experience in American sport, where the concept of ‘player power’ has been reshaped and redefined over decades. Listening to him, I was struck by how the battle lines we see in South African football today echo wider global debates: who truly holds the power in football, and how fair is the system meant to govern it?

In their formative years, the major American sports like basketball, ice hockey, baseball, and American football operated under systems not too dissimilar from football’s traditional transfer model. Teams held the upper hand, players had little agency, and movement was tightly controlled. Contracts were more like shackles than agreements, binding athletes to organisations that could dictate their careers with minimal input from the individual.

But that landscape began to change nearly half a century ago, when players in these sports started to unite under the banners of their unions. What followed was a slow but decisive power shift. Through collective bargaining, legal battles, and strikes, athletes in the NBA, NHL, MLB, and NFL gradually clawed back influence, establishing rights that today we take for granted: free agency, revenue sharing, salary arbitration, and stronger protections around contracts.

The transformation didn’t happen overnight; it was the product of decades of negotiations and confrontations, but the outcome was profound. Those unions grew into some of the most powerful institutions in world sport, permanently altering the balance between athlete and employer, and reshaping how leagues function both financially and culturally.

Yormark has decades of experience across major U.S. franchises. Before joining RocNation, he served as President & CEO of the NHL’s Florida Panthers. He also held senior roles with the Tampa Bay Lightning, Columbus Blue Jackets, and the New York Yankees, specialising in sales, broadcasting, and sponsorship. He and his brother, Brett, are both highly respected sports executives.

“IT’S A MAJOR ISSUE FOR ME, BECAUSE WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT OUR COMPANY AND OUR FOUNDER, JAY-Z, HE GOT INTO THIS BUSINESS — FIRST IN MUSIC AND THEN IN SPORT — TO EMPOWER THE MUSICIAN AND TO EMPOWER THE ATHLETE.”

RocNation’s fingerprint in South African football is relatively small, with just three young local footballers on their books (Emile Witbooi, Siyabonga Mabena and Neo Bohloko), but the company, founded by music mogul and superstar, Jay-Z, only recently launched their African expansion. They have already made waves in international football, signing clients like Jérôme Boateng, Romelu Lukaku, Kevin De Bruyne, Eric Bailly, Axel Witsel and of course, Vinicius Jr.

They also have had an ongoing partnership with Mamelodi Sundowns since 2021.

I asked Yormark, who also represents Springbok captain Siya Kolisi, amongst others, about player power in the USA – something which has always intrigued me, seeing players so in charge of their careers on and off the pitch – and on his impressions internationally, where it is less significant.

“So it’s a major issue,” Yormark answered.

“And personally, it’s a major issue for me, because when you think about our company and our founder, Jay-Z, he got into this business — first in music and then in sport — to empower the musician and to empower the athlete.

“When you think about athletes around the world, Europe, South Africa, Africa, they don’t have a seat at the table. They don’t have a voice. They’re not involved in the most important decisions within those sports.

“They’re told what their schedule is, they’re told where they need to show up, they’re told where they have to travel. They’re given whatever resources are decided to be given to them, and that’s

it. They have to accept that.

“In America, it’s very different. Unions are very powerful; player unions are very powerful. They demand a seat at the table. Collective bargaining is the key to the success of all the leagues in America. You look at the NBA, the model league, the relationship between the players, the owners, and the league is incredible. And collectively, together, they’re working on innovation. They’re looking at how to expand the game. How do they make the game more successful? How do we become more global?”

“But players have a seat at the table. That’s what I’m used to. That’s why, as I have to enter these other markets, and I’ve seen the lack of empowerment that players have, it’s just troubling for me. It’s troubling for me, because whether we want to admit it or not, people, fans come to watch those players, they’re their heroes, and we have to understand that and recognise that.”

Sport is undergoing a global transformation, and while traditionalists cling stubbornly to old systems and ideas, the pace of change is leaving many behind. What some fail to grasp is that markets are shifting, supporters are evolving, and the way people connect with sport no longer looks the way it did a generation ago.

Once upon a time, clubs were rooted almost entirely in their local communities, your team was the one from your neighbourhood, your city, your region. That link has not disappeared, but it has been overtaken by a wider, more commercial reality: in many cases, the majority of a club’s fans now live outside its borders. Manchester United, Real Madrid, Barcelona, Liverpool, their identities are now shaped as much by global television audiences and social media followers as by the match-going fans in their home stadiums. While some clubs could, and smaller ones still do, exist on a micro-level, their budgets are also relative to that.

This shift is mirrored in how player rights are being recognised. FIFPRO, the world players’ union, has expanded significantly in both reach and influence. While it still faces challenges, navigating inconsistent international rules, legal grey areas, and the different interpretations of labour law across regions, its progress cannot be understated.

Over the past two decades, it has pushed through reforms that would have been unthinkable in football’s old guard era, strengthening the individual’s rights in a sport long dominated by club and institutional power.

The tension, then, lies in the clash between these two worlds: one where loyalty and tradition remain the rallying cry, and another where football is undeniably part of a global market, with players and fans alike demanding rights and recognition that reflect modern realities.

“It’s a great question,” Yormark continued.

“I could go on forever on this topic,



“IN AMERICA, IT’S VERY DIFFERENT. UNIONS ARE VERY POWERFUL; PLAYER UNIONS ARE VERY POWERFUL. THEY DEMAND A SEAT AT THE TABLE.”

because it bothers me. It really bothers me, because I recognise the strength and the power and the influence that these athletes have, and I’ve grown up in that culture in America.

“You know, in America, the athlete and the name on the back of the jersey is in some cases, more important than the logo on the front.

“Think about LeBron James. LeBron James, I’m a Cleveland Cavaliers fan when he comes out of high school. He goes to Miami. I’m a Heat fan. He goes back to Cleveland. I’m a Cleveland fan, and then he goes to LA, guess what, I’m a Lakers fan. I hated the Lakers for so many years, but then I became a fan. By the way, that’s what happens. Kevin Durant, my favourite basketball player, and he was part of RocNation for many years, goes to OKC, I’m a fan. Goes to Golden State, I’m reluctantly a fan of Golden State. Goes to my brother’s team at that time, Brooklyn, my brother was the CEO at the time, I’m a Brooklyn Nets fan. Then he goes to Phoenix. I’m a Phoenix fan, and now, heck, I gotta go out and buy my Houston Jersey because I’m a Rockets fan.

“So that’s what it’s like in America, because of the recognition and the power that players have and how much we look up to them.”

But is football and the rest of the world ready for such a dramatic shift? In Ribeiro Costa’s case, he has cited the recent landmark ruling involving Lassina Diarra. He may be the first to benefit from that decision, but the Diarra case is set to have a major impact on global football.

Earlier in August, Dutch organisation, Justice for Players, launched a class action against FIFA and several European football associations, arguing that regulations since 2002 have unlawfully restricted players and cost up to 100,000 footballers billions in lost income citing the Diarra case, which found FIFA’s transfer rules violated EU law by limiting freedom of movement and breaching competition regulations.

Interestingly, the Dutch organisation is being advised by Belgian lawyer Jean-Louis Dupont, the legal mind who is also representing Ribeiro Costa.

Dupont was not only Diarra’s lawyer, but DuPont was also behind the landmark 1995 Bosman ruling at the Court of Justice of the European Union, representing former Belgian player Jean-Marc Bosman.

That decision reshaped modern football. Until then, clubs could demand transfer fees even after a player’s contract had expired, effectively trapping players unless a buying team paid compensation. The ruling swept that system away, establishing that footballers, like any other workers, had the right to move freely once their contracts ended.

That balance, however, may soon tilt even further.

While we have already seen isolated cases where players have been able to buy out their contracts through carefully inserted clauses, negotiated settlements, or simply the goodwill of a club, the possibility now exists that this could become a firmly established legal precedent. If so, it could shake football’s economy at its core, especially the way transfer values are calculated and how clubs treat their playing assets.

For years, clubshave set player valuations that often bear little resemblance to the salaries those players actually earn. In some cases, this mismatch has been glaring. A player may be modestly paid, yet valued by his club at a figure completely detached from his on-field contributions. This tension has come into sharp focus in South Africa.

Take the examples of Velebayi and Baartman, Spurs’ public valuation of these players seemed less about their performances, the value of their outstanding contract, or current market standing, and more about the club’s insistence on the money it had ‘invested’ in their development. A figure of R8 million was repeatedly cited as the cost of producing a professional footballer through their academy.

But in a fair and open market, based on those players’ current age profiles, statistical output, and professional records at the time, would they realistically fetch R8 million individually? The valuation of promise and potential drops significantly in global football after a certain age, unless the numbers are being delivered on the pitch too.

This is the hard gamble inherent in youth development systems: for every success, there are multiple failures. Clubs justify



“PLAYERS HAVE A SEAT AT THE TABLE. THAT’S WHAT I’M USED TO. THAT’S WHY, AS I HAVE TO ENTER THESE OTHER MARKETS, AND I’VE SEEN THE LACK OF EMPOWERMENT THAT PLAYERS HAVE, IT’S JUST TROUBLING FOR ME.”

the expense by working on the principle that ‘one star pays for the group’; one successful academy graduate’s value is meant to cover the sunk cost of several others who don’t make it.

Development structures are often presented as benevolent; clubs highlight how much they ‘do for players,’ but in reality, they are primarily a cost-saving exercise. Promoting a youth player into the first team saves not just on signing-on fees, but also on salaries, since a homegrown youngster costs a fraction of what a seasoned professional from outside would demand. But if they truly value that development player, the professional contract must reflect that too.

The Spurs case, however, is further complicated by the club’s relegation from professional football. With the fall into amateur ranks, their contracts with these players were annulled by the PSL’s rules, leaving both parties in uncharted and unresolved territory, with appeals ongoing.

That is why their story parallels that of Ribeiro Costa: in both instances, we see the clash between a player’s right to control his career and a club’s insistence on protecting its perceived investments.

As contractual law continues to evolve around the world, these disputes are not just about one player or one club; they point to a shifting landscape where the old balance of power in football is once again being rewritten.



NO REGRETS FOR TS GALAXY'S HAT-TRICK HERO PUSO DITHEJANE

It's been a whirlwind few weeks for TS Galaxy's PUSO DITHEJANE. In July, the North West-born midfielder celebrated his 21st birthday, and just a few days ago, he announced himself in style with a sensational first senior hat-trick, inspiring Galaxy's comeback rout of Chippa United. But Dithejane's name first hit the headlines long before most fans even knew his game — back when he was released by Kaizer Chiefs after refusing to act as a ball boy for a senior fixture, a decision that sparked plenty of debate. From the fabled School of Excellence to Chiefs' youth ranks and now making waves in the PSL, Dithejane's journey has already had its twists and turns. In this edition, iDiski Times senior journalist LORENZ KÖHLER sits down with him to revisit that controversial moment, reflect on his rise, and explore his ambitions for the road ahead.

Lorenz Kohler: Thank you for taking the time to speak to me. I really appreciate it. Just watched you now in a training session, looking very sharp, very good, and I'm sure you're full of confidence after scoring the first hat-trick of your career last week.

Puso Dithejane: Ja. All that I'm gonna say is that I'm putting the hard work in training because I want to improve myself and improve my career. So this season, I just hope that I'm gonna score more goals and get more assists. So I'm working on my confidence, and now the confidence is coming back. So, for the upcoming games, I'm gonna do my best, as I should, and play for the team.

LK: So, your third professional season in the senior team of Galaxy since arriving here. Do you feel now like you know you belong? Because maybe in the first few months, it's just getting to grips of playing with seniors, playing at the highest level in South Africa. Do you feel now like a proper senior footballer that needs to contribute to the team?

PD: Yes, I feel like that, because I've been in the team for three seasons now. So I must show my quality and my talent so that the team can go forward and achieve things. So this season, I'm going to do my best and contribute for the team, score goals and give assists for the players.

LK: You just said before our interview, you're from the North West. Can you just explain how you got into football? Was it just playing in the streets? Which clubs did you play for towards this journey?

PD: I started playing soccer at school, at Bloemhof Primary School. Then, from there, in grade six, I went for trials at the School of Excellence. Then they said the school it's high school, not primary school, so I waited so that I can pass my grade seven, so I can go for trials again. Then I went for trials. Then they chose me at the School of Excellence. I played for the School of Excellence for four years. Then Kaizer Chiefs scouted me, and then I went there and did my Grade 12 there. Then I played there for two years. Ja, then I came here to TS Galaxy after Chiefs.

LK: How did you find out about the School of Excellence? Was it like something you saw on the internet, or did somebody advise you to go there and stuff?

PD: We had a player who went to the School of Excellence before, so they motivated me and told me that I should try because they've seen my talent at home. So I went there and tried. Then I went with the player who was at the School of Excellence.

LK: I saw a picture like a couple of weeks ago, when you were still at the School of Excellence, you had a very good team, and a lot of those players are now in the PSL playing professionally. Can you mention

who was part of that team at the School of Excellence?

PD: I played with great players there. I played with Relebohile Mofokeng. I played with Onele Rulwana, Akhanyile Norawana. I didn't play with Kutlwano Letlhaku. He was young then, but I saw that he's a great player. I played with Siyabonga Gumede, Cemran Dansin. Siyabonga Mabena was also still younger.

LK: So a lot of you guys obviously went into the DDC level, and some say DDC is not good, some say it's great. What did you feel like about that jump to DDC? What was it like? Did you feel like it was a better level? Did you feel that you developed well in DDC?

PD: I played in GDL before playing at DDC, and GDL was development. So I developed from the School of Excellence. So then, the time I went to the DDC, I was doing good and developing still. And DDC, it's a great league. It's a league to show that players are growing now. They're improving on what they are doing. So, yeah, the DDC is a great league.

LK: Where do you feel that it's more challenging – physical, tactically? Maybe the players are technically better? Where did you see a difference?

PD: The difference is that at the DDC, there are technical things there. The players can dribble and can run. And the players there are young. They have energy.

LK: In terms of your position, because I mean, a lot of people know you as a right-back. Is that where you were playing as a young kid, and at the School of Excellence? At Chiefs, we know you were playing as a right-back, sometimes even left-back...

PD: At the School of Excellence, I started as a striker, then the coach told me I can play centre-back. I played centre-back for quite a while. Then I went to right-back at Chiefs. Then I came here. They played me as a 10, because I am used to doing all positions on the ground.

LK: Where do you feel most comfortable? Where do you enjoy the most?

PD: You can put me anywhere.

LK: But everybody has a favourite position, they love playing there.

PD: For me, then winger.

LK: Right wing, left wing?

PD: Left wing.

LK: Because that's where you scored your hat-trick?

PD: Ja!

LK: So they signed you as a right-back. What were the words from the



“THE COACH TOLD ME THAT I HAVE QUALITIES TO BE A GREAT PLAYER, A FORWARD PLAYER. SO HE TOLD ME THAT I JUST NEED TO IMPROVE AT CERTAIN POINTS, AND THAT’S WHAT I’M DOING NOW.”

coaches or the technical staff at TS Galaxy, when they said, ‘We’re not going to play you right-back.’

PD: The coach told me that I have qualities to be a great player, a forward player. So he told me that I just need to improve at certain points, and that's what I'm doing now. And, ja, I'm enjoying being a forward in TS Galaxy.

LK: You're seeing players that graduate from the DDC, like Shandre Campbell, Mohau Nkota, Mofokeng, going into Bafana and things like that. Is it inspiring? Do you guys look up to them?

PD: Ja, for me, I look up after them because we speak on our phones and we're motivating each other and telling ourselves that we need to improve and go to big clubs or go to Europe. So, ja, I look after them.

LK: What are you hoping to achieve this season?

PD: For me, I want to score goals. I want to win at least a cup this season. And ja, the rest will come after.

LK: You obviously had a taste of Bafana with COSAFA. And you've seen now that a lot of the gents who went through COSAFA – Khulumani Ndamane is now a proper Bafana player – you know what I mean, World Cup qualifiers and things like that. Are you looking to push into that 23-man squad? The AFCON is

coming up, a World Cup at the end of the season.

PD: Ja, for me, I’m pushing for it, because I see there are young players that are in the Bafana Bafana squad now. I feel motivated about that because they are my age, and I can do that also. So I’m pushing for that.

LK: You finished fifth in the league last season with a team. A lot of players have left, but a lot of players have also joined. Are you confident that you guys can even go one further, maybe to CAF spots? I know you said you’re targeting a cup, but in the league as well. Do you think the squad is capable, has the talent, the drive to be better than last season?

PD: What I’ve seen in training, I can say, ja, the team, the players that we got now, we can do things that other teams can’t do. We can win cups and go to CAF. Ja, but then the team now is working to go for third place so we can play the CAF Confederation Cup.

LK: Khulumani was also at Chiefs, and now Ntandoyenkosi Nkosi joins, who was also at Chiefs. Are you expecting Nkosi to be as influential as you and Ndamane coming into a senior setup?

PD: Ja, he’s going to be influential in the team. I’ve seen him in training. He’s improved now, and I’m happy for him. So what I want to say to him is that he must keep working hard and believe in God, and everything will come to him.

LK: What are his strengths? What is he good at?

PD: He’s good at passing, passing the ball, turning and marking. Ja, he’s good at that.

LK: There was always a lot of talk about why you left Chiefs. You can see on social media, the fans are saying, ‘Eish, he should have been there’, and things like that. But you know, everything happens for a reason. Possibly you wouldn’t have been a hat-trick scoring COSAFA Bafana player if it wasn’t for what happened. Everything that was said in the media, was it true? Did you leave because of ill discipline, or what? How did you end up leaving?

PD: Ja, it’s all the truth. I left because I refused to be a ball boy.

LK: It was you and Omega Mdaka?

PD: It was me and Mdaka, ja.

LK: So was there a disciplinary hearing? And then they just said you must leave.

PD: We had a meeting before leaving. We didn’t have a disciplinary hearing. We just had a meeting. Then they told us we must leave. Then we left.

LK: So how did that make you feel during that period? Because I can imagine for you and Omega, it was



“I FELT SAD, OBVIOUS, AND I WAS HOPING I COULD PLAY FOR KAIZER CHIEFS, AND MAYBE, MAYBE NOT, MAYBE, MAYBE I’M GONNA PLAY THERE.”

like a club you were dreaming of becoming a first-team player for, how did you feel during those months when you were without a club?

PD: Um, I felt sad, obvious, and I was hoping I could play for Kaizer Chiefs, and maybe, maybe not, maybe I’m gonna play there [in the future], but then I’m here at TS Galaxy now, focusing here. But I was hoping to play there, and I was working hard for that spot in the first team.

LK: Do you regret your decision to say no then?

PD: I’m for me now. I can’t say that, because I’m improved now and I’ve added something in my career. So I won’t say that.

LK: Your coach said now he wants to see you in Europe. You’ve seen a couple of players at your club go to bigger clubs in the league, and even to Europe. Are you dreaming about that?

PD: Ja, I’m dreaming about that.

LK: Where exactly would you see yourself playing?

PD: Ligue 1. Ja, France.

LK: What is it about France that’s attractive?

PD: For me, it’s that I support PSG, so I want to play against my favourite team.

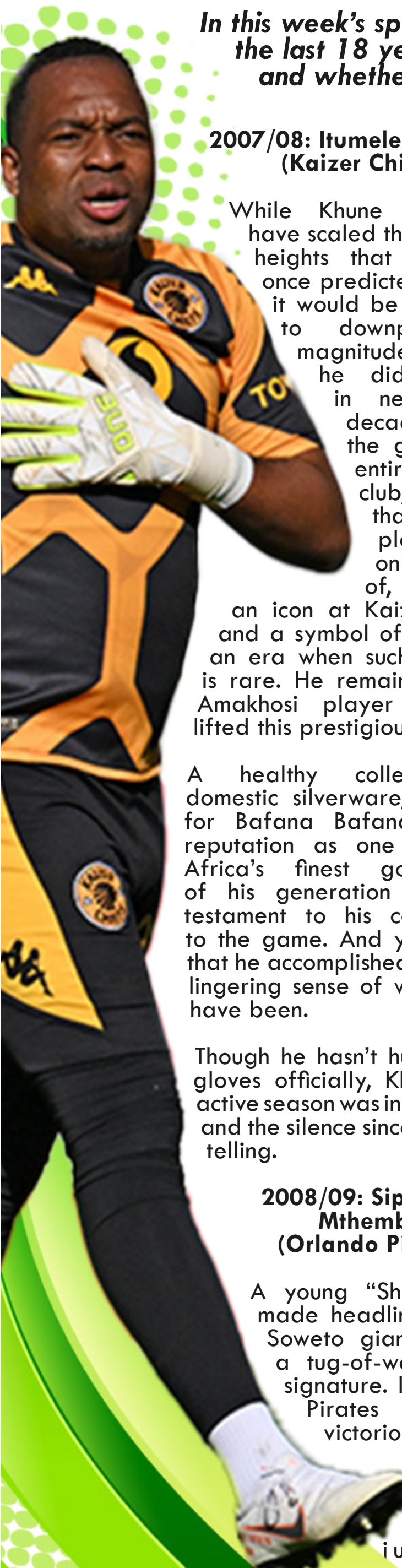
LK: Thank you very much, it was fantastic speaking to you.



RELE’S CHALLENGE OF REACHING FULL POTENTIAL

When Relebohile Mofokeng won the Young Player of the Season award for the second consecutive season, he joined illustrious company to have won the award twice. The only other person to have achieved this was Mofokeng’s Bafana Bafana captain, Ronwen Williams, who took the trophy home at the end of the 2011/12 and 2012/13 campaigns.

In this week’s special feature, ROB DELPORT looks back over the last 18 years at who won the award, how they fared, and whether that early potential ever blossomed fully.



2007/08: Itumeleng Khune (Kaizer Chiefs)

While Khune may not have scaled the dizzying heights that so many once predicted for him, it would be a mistake to downplay the magnitude of what he did achieve in nearly two decades in the game, and entirely at one club, a career that most players can only dream of, becoming an icon at Kaizer Chiefs and a symbol of loyalty in an era when such devotion is rare. He remains the last Amakhosi player to have lifted this prestigious award.

A healthy collection of domestic silverware, 90 caps for Bafana Bafana, and a reputation as one of South Africa’s finest goalkeepers of his generation stand as testament to his contribution to the game. And yet, for all that he accomplished, there’s a lingering sense of what might have been.

Though he hasn’t hung up his gloves officially, Khune’s last active season was in 2023/24, and the silence since has been telling.

2008/09: Siphelile Mthembu (Orlando Pirates)

A young “Shaka Zulu” made headlines as the Soweto giants waged a tug-of-war for his signature. In the end, Pirates emerged victorious, and for moment, it seemed h y p e w a s j u s t i f i e d .

Bursting onto the scene with six league goals in his debut campaign, he scooped this award and appeared destined for greatness.

But football has a way of rewriting the scripts we think are set in stone. For the next decade, he drifted between clubs, including a stint at Kaizer Chiefs, without ever truly recapturing that early spark. It wasn’t until a spell at Cape Town City, 10 years after his debut season, that he finally eclipsed that six-goal tally, netting seven in a single league campaign.

Fifteen years after his first season in professional football, Mthembu finally broke the double-digit barrier, albeit in the second tier with Pretoria Callies. It wasn’t the grand stage many had once envisioned for him, but it was a milestone that spoke volumes about his persistence, resilience, and enduring love for the game, even when the limelight had long since moved on.

2009/10: Siyanda Xulu (Mamelodi Sundowns)

If ever a footballer’s journey could be summed up as a tide of highs and lows, it would be Xulu’s. After his exit from the Kaizer Chiefs youth ranks, he signed for Mamelodi Sundowns, and at Chloorkop, he justified the early hype, breaking into the first team with poise and authority. His talent soon earned him a move to Russia with FC Rostov, and for a time, the horizon looked golden.

But football’s currents can be unforgiving. At Rostov, Xulu’s star dimmed as he fell out of favour, prompting a return to Chiefs, a homecoming that, unfortunately, never found its rhythm. Benched and on the periphery, he needed a fresh chapter, and Maritzburg United became the stage for his resurgence. There, he rediscovered his form, a renaissance that opened doors to stints in Israel and Azerbaijan.

His resilience and experience were rewarded with Bafana Bafana call-ups, and at the 2023 AFCON, he helped the team secure a historic bronze medal. Yet, in the unpredictable ebb of his career, Xulu has been without a club since 2024, a seasoned campaigner whose journey still feels unfinished, with one last wave perhaps waiting to be caught.

2010/11: Thulani Serero (Ajax Cape Town)

The 2010/11 season proved to be the perfect springboard for Serero, propelling him from local prodigy to a seasoned globetrotter in a career that would span almost a decade and a half abroad. Of all the winners of this award, few, if any, can match Serero's achievements on foreign soil. At Ajax Amsterdam, he etched his name into the club's rich history by lifting the Eredivisie trophy three times, cementing his status as one of South Africa's most successful exports. His winning ways continued in the Middle East, where he added the UAE Pro League title with Al-Jazira to his glittering résumé.

Yet, for all the silverware and success overseas, Serero's journey wasn't without its shadows. His relationship with the national team was complicated and, at times, strained.

Earlier this year, Serero brought his footballing story full circle with a return to South Africa, signing for Cape Town City.

2011/12 & 12/13: Ronwen Williams (SuperSport United)

There was never much debate about Williams' destiny; he seemed born to stand between the posts as one of Mzansi's finest goalkeepers. Winning this award in back-to-back seasons was merely the opening act in what has become a remarkable and enduring career. He has been a pillar of consistency in the PSL, setting a standard few can match and even fewer can sustain. When he first pulled on the Bafana Bafana jersey, some sceptics questioned whether he could make the leap from domestic excellence to international stardom. But a few years later, a wiser, more seasoned Williams silenced any critics with performances that combined sharp reflexes, impeccable positioning, and the kind of calm leadership that anchors a team in the most intense moments.

Over the last five years, Williams hasn't just been South Africa's best; he has been Africa's benchmark for goalkeeping excellence. From commanding his area with authority to producing world-class saves on the biggest stages, he has cemented his place among the elite shot-stoppers on the planet. In doing so, he's rewritten the expectations of what a South African-based goalkeeper can achieve, proving that his story is not just about talent, but also about resilience, growth, and unshakable belief.

2013/14: Keagan Dolly (Ajax Cape Town)

Dolly's career has never been one to scoff at; it's just that, since his electrifying breakthrough at Ajax Cape Town, he's been more of a slow-burn spark than an all-consuming blaze. At his best, he is a player of elegance, vision, and technical mastery, capable of turning a game with a single deft touch or defence-splitting pass. Whether wearing the colours of Mamelodi Sundowns, Montpellier in France, Kaizer Chiefs, or most recently TS Galaxy, Dolly rarely put in a poor shift when he was on the pitch.

Yet, his journey has been one of frustrating interruptions. A catalogue of injuries, combined with long spells on the sidelines, too often blunted

his momentum. Outside of his time at Sundowns, where he enjoyed genuine success, he was frequently part of teams wrestling with their own instability, which made it harder for him to consistently shine. The talent was never in question; the challenge was stringing together enough games to let it truly flourish.

There's still a touch of magic in those boots, and while the years ahead may not offer the same heady promise of his early days, there's every chance for a late-career chapter that surprises those who think they've already read the ending.

2014/15: Phumlani Ntshangase (Bidvest Wits)

Last seen in professional football during a short stint with Highbury in the Motsepe Foundation Championship last season, Ntshangase's career is a tale of early promise that never quite blossomed as many had hoped. Bursting onto the scene at Bidvest Wits, he was tipped by some to become one of the country's next great midfielders, a player with vision, composure, and a touch of class. Yet, football can be an unforgiving stage, and after parting ways with the Students, Ntshangase found himself embarking on a journeyman's path. He would turn out for SuperSport United, Maritzburg United, and Baroka, each spell offering a fresh chance to reignite the spark.

But the momentum never lasted. Injuries repeatedly derailed his rhythm, while inconsistency in form prevented him from building the sustained impact required at the highest level. As the seasons passed, that once-bright trajectory began to level off and eventually fade.

2015/16: Aubrey Modiba (Mpumalanga Black Aces)

'The Postman' always delivers, and the School of Excellence product has been doing just that since bursting onto the scene. After he claimed this award, Black Aces were sold and transformed into Cape Town City, but rather than unpack his bags in the Mother City, SuperSport United swooped in and made him their own. There,



Modiba's class and versatility quickly became apparent; whether deployed in midfield, on the wing, or as an attacking full-back, he consistently influenced games and looked destined for a European adventure.

But when the time came, it wasn't a club from abroad that secured his signature; it was the irresistible pull of Sundowns, and Modiba became an integral cog in a team that has swept aside all domestic competition, winning every trophy on offer in South African football. On the international stage, Modiba's steady excellence earned him a regular place in Hugo Broos' Bafana Bafana setup, where he has played a vital role in their resurgence. At 30, the only chapter missing from his footballing résumé is that long-anticipated stint abroad, a move that may never happen, but given his medal-laden career, one suspects 'The Postman' will sleep soundly regardless. After all, he has delivered on almost every front.

2016/17: Phakamani Mahlambi (Bidvest Wits)

When I first started this feature, my mind went straight to the tragedy of Mahlambi, a talent that once promised so much, now seemingly lost to the football wilderness. There was a reason Mahlambi became the first South African to pull on the jersey of African giants Al Ahly, a player whose pace, skill, and vision suggested he could light up any pitch. Yet injuries that threatened to end his career, poor management decisions, and off-field turbulence all conspired to make him vanish from the professional game, leaving fans and pundits asking what could have been.

But football has a way of writing second acts, and hope is alive again. News has emerged that Gavin Hunt, the coach who once believed in him, is giving Mahlambi a chance to reignite his career at Durban City. It's a lifeline for a player whose talent deserves to be seen, appreciated, and celebrated again.

For the love of the game, one can only hope it works. If football has taught us anything, it's that redemption stories are always worth watching. Mahlambi's story isn't over; it might just be entering its most compelling chapter yet.

2017/18: Siphesihle Ndlovu (Maritzburg United)

It would be unfair to call Ndlovu's career a disappointment, but it's equally true that he hasn't quite scaled the same heights he reached when he first claimed this award. Back then, the classy, all-action midfielder seemed destined to become a prolific force, yet his

goalscoring touch never truly returned. His big-money move to Pirates promised much, but the Buccaneers proved to be a turbulent chapter where opportunities and impact were hard to come by.

A fresh start at SuperSport United reminded everyone of the quality, even if his name didn't always make the scoresheet. It was the kind of redemption arc that suggested the best might still be ahead, if he could just find the right environment to thrive.

That environment may well have arrived this season. His transfer to Chiefs has quietly been one of the Amakhosi's most astute bits of business in the recent window. Already, Ndlovu has stepped up as a match-winner. If his early form is anything to go by, the midfield maestro may be ready to write the most compelling chapter of his career yet, one where the promise of his youth finally blossoms into stardom.

2018/19: Teboho Mokoena (SuperSport United)

What can one say about Tebza that hasn't already been whispered in admiration from touchlines and press boxes across the country? From the very first time I saw him as a youth player, it was obvious he wasn't just good, he was operating on an entirely different wavelength. The touch, the vision, the ability to see two passes ahead... it all screamed of a player destined for greatness. Since lifting this award, whether orchestrating the midfield at SuperSport United or dictating play with effortless authority at Mamelodi Sundowns, he has done nothing to change that first impression. If anything, he's only deepened it.

In my eyes, Tebza belongs on the grandest stages, testing himself against the finest players Europe has to offer. He was already ready for that challenge the day he signed for Sundowns, but what's remarkable is how much he has grown since then. The tactical awareness is sharper, the decision-making quicker, the technical execution even more precise. He's not just better, he's more complete, more confident, and more influential than ever before.

But greatness isn't about comfort, it's about daring to step into the unknown. For Tebza, that unknown is Europe: a place where his range of passing, control under pressure, and unflappable composure could make him a star on a global stage. Until that day comes, he remains South Africa's most complete midfielder.

2019/20: Goodman Mosele (Baroka)

Nobody has ever questioned Mosele's ability. From the moment he broke onto the scene, his elegance in possession, crisp passing range, and intelligent reading of the game marked him as one of South Africa's finest midfield prospects. Yet, for reasons that remain puzzling or not quite clear, his time at Orlando Pirates or the national team never quite caught fire.

Now, back on loan at Chippa United, Mosele has something invaluable: minutes on the pitch. And for a player of his quality, regular football is the key to unlocking that next level. If he can harness his full range of abilities, breaking lines with his passes, gliding past challenges,

and dictating the rhythm, there's no reason he can't turn his career narrative around.

At his best, Mosele isn't just good; he's a player who elevates those around him. Bafana Bafana, in their ongoing search for depth and creativity in midfield, could do with exactly that kind of influence. The talent is there.

2020/21: Evidence Makgopa (Baroka)

Makgopa has always been a fascinating figure in South African football, a forward who doesn't quite fit the conventional mould. Tall, rangy, deceptively quick, and with a knack for using his frame to both unsettle defenders and bring teammates into play, he offers a rare blend of attributes that make him as unpredictable as he is dangerous. From his early days at Baroka, you could sense there was something different about him. I always imagined him making a direct leap to Europe, to a league where his unique skill set could be refined and maximised. That door, I believe, hasn't closed yet.

Since his move to Pirates, Makgopa has shown he's more than just potential; he's a player who delivers. Whether it's scoring vital goals, creating space for others, or serving as a physical focal point that changes the dynamic of a match, he has become a valuable weapon in the Buccaneers' arsenal. His adaptability makes him equally effective in different systems, and his performances for Bafana have only reinforced the idea that he can deliver on the big stage.

There's still a sense that Makgopa's ceiling is far higher than what we've seen so far. The raw tools, strength, awareness, timing, and a striker's instinct, are all in place.

2021/22: Luke Fleurs (SuperSport United)

Easily the most heartbreaking story on this list, and one that still tightens the chest and moistens the eyes. Luke Fleurs' journey was one of promise, resilience, and quiet determination to rise above life's hurdles. Ubuntu Academy's first "star", his talent blossomed when he signed for SuperSport United, where his assured defending and calm presence on the ball quickly earned him call-ups to Hugo Broos' Bafana Bafana squad.

Fleurs was not without his struggles; off-the-field issues briefly clouded his early path, but he overcame them with a maturity beyond his years, determined to fulfil the potential so many saw in him. His move to Kaizer Chiefs was both surprising and symbolic: a fresh chapter at one of the country's biggest clubs, where he seemed poised to take the next step in a career that had only just begun to reach its peak.

But the promise would never be realised. In early 2024, tragedy struck in the cruellest of fashions when Fleurs' life was stolen during an attempted robbery, a senseless act that robbed South African football of not just a gifted defender, but a young man with so much more to give on and off the pitch. His story remains a sobering reminder of life's fragility, and his name, Luke Fleurs, will be remembered with equal measures of pride and sorrow. RIP, Luke.

2022/23: Cassius Mailula (Mamelodi Sundowns)

Cassius Mailula didn't just step onto the PSL stage; he arrived with a bang. In his debut season for Mamelodi Sundowns, the young forward lit up the league with his composure and knack for scoring in big moments. His performances not only earned him this prestigious award but also caught the eye of overseas scouts, sealing a high-profile move to Major League Soccer with Toronto FC. It seemed like the perfect springboard for a glittering career abroad.

But football has a way of testing even the brightest talents. In Canada, Mailula's minutes were limited, and the rhythm that had defined his game at Sundowns never quite clicked. The frustration was evident, yet fate offered him a lifeline when his former coach, Rulani Mokwena, took charge at Moroccan giants Wydad AC. A loan deal reunited the two, and under Mokwena's guidance, Mailula rediscovered his sharpness, reminding everyone why he had been billed as one of South Africa's most exciting prospects.

Now, the rumour mill is spinning once again, this time with whispers of Mailula following Mokwena to Algeria. If true, it could be another pivotal chapter in a career still in its early days but already marked by bold moves, rapid rises, and tantalising glimpses of a player who might just become one of Bafana Bafana's future stars. For Mailula, the best deliveries may still be on their way.

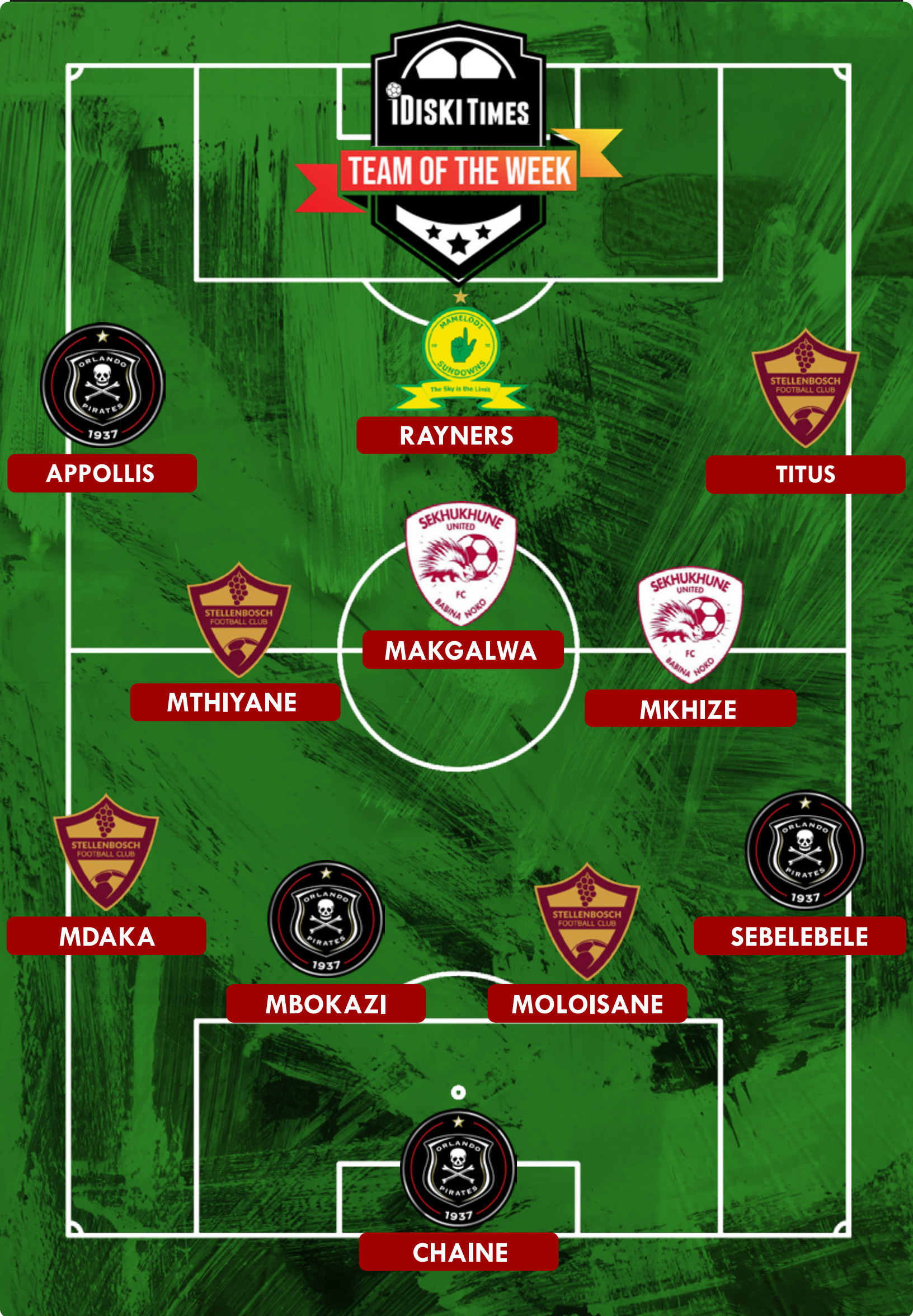
2023/24 & 24/25: Relebohile Mofokeng (Orlando Pirates)

How high can Rele soar? That is a question that only time can answer. The first time he claimed the award, the race had been tight, with Shandre Campbell and Ime Okon nipping at his heels.

Last season, however, any doubts evaporated. Rele dominated every discussion, every highlight reel, and was also a candidate for Player of the Season. If this trajectory continues, the only limit to what he can achieve may well be the sky itself.



MTN8 SEMI-FINAL SECOND LEG TEAM OF THE WEEK



ACE OF THE WEEK:
PUSO DITHEJANE

Our iDiski Times Ace of the Week is TS Galaxy’s Puso Dithejane after his heroics in their 4-1 victory over Chippa United. After Chippa had taken the early lead, Dithejane took the game by the scruff of its neck and scored the first hat-trick of the 2025/26 Betway Premiership campaign. The former Kaizer Chiefs Diski Challenge star started the display off with a fantastic strike from outside the box, followed it up with a well-timed run and well-taken header, before wrapping up the result with a composed finish after eluding the last line of defence. Don’t forget to read Dithejane’s interview in this edition!



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.

3v2 into 4v3

This week, we continue with our focus on training practices, going through some tried and tested practices that I have used over the years. The idea behind this is obviously not for coaches to necessarily copy these directly. But to perhaps use them if you like them as an inspiration for your own context. The reality is that, consciously or unconsciously, when we design a practice, this will be greatly influenced by the context we work in. This might be a very direct influence, such as that you design the practice as a direct response to a growth area that you have identified in your team’s play. However, even if it isn’t as direct as that sort of A straight to B influence, it might be a more indirect influence. One where, for example, you have the abilities of your players in mind when coming up with a practice. The abilities of players across various levels of football obviously differ greatly. And that is not just overall ability, but also, just as importantly, different strengths.

For example, we might be working with players who have an extremely high ability with the ball at their feet but who have some issues with physicality or with playing with a high level of intensity against the ball when pressing the opposition. Or the opposite can be true; we may have extremely physically dominant players at our disposal who can press like crazy and who are extremely physical, but who may, for example, have issues in playing with the ball, especially under pressure. Players can be really good in different ways, and this may greatly influence the practices that they need or that they can handle from various different aspects. These contrast examples that I give here are obviously quite ‘black and white’, but the working reality is most likely going to be much more in-between, varied and

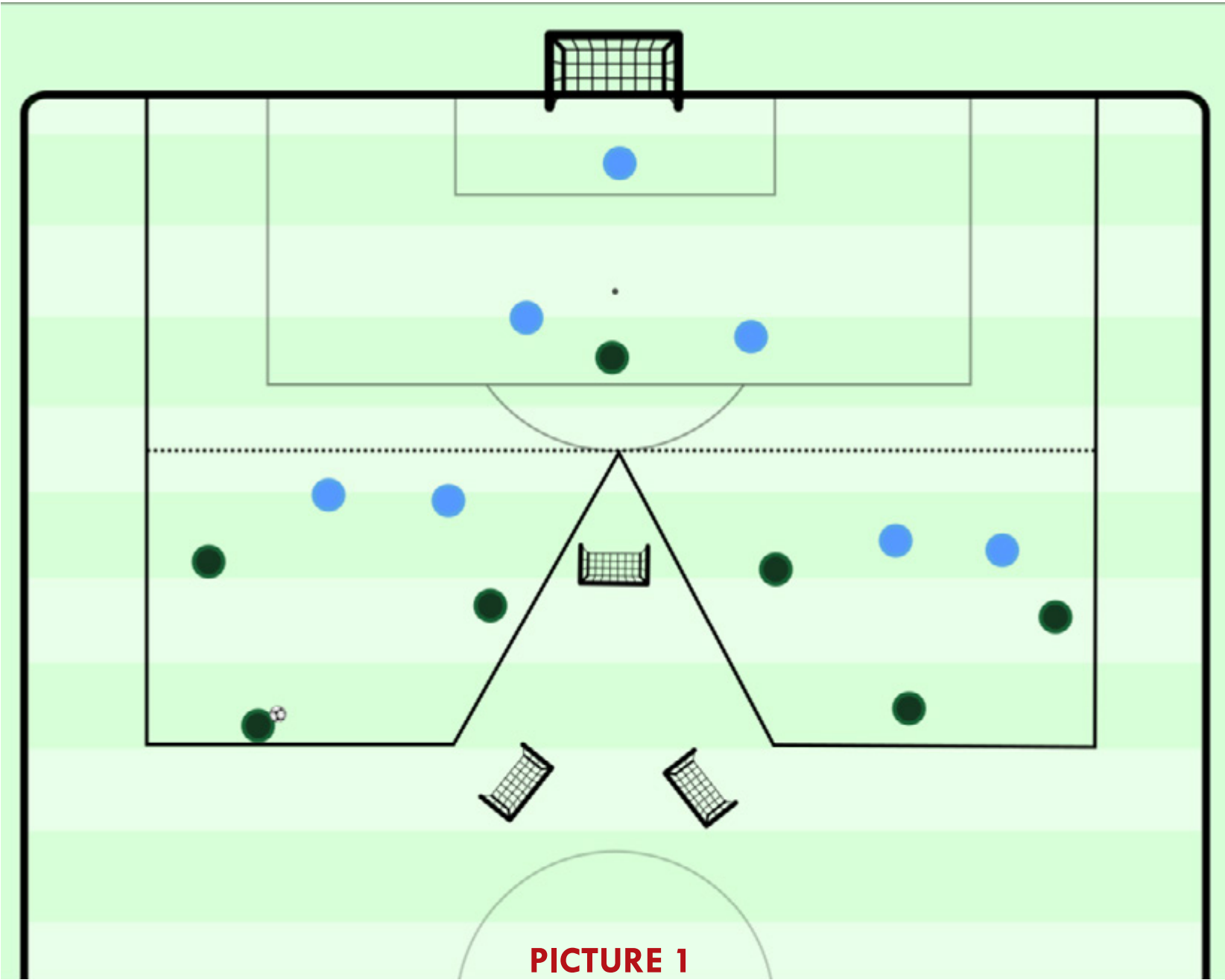
perhaps ‘grey’. Clearly analysing and being able to describe your context is a huge part of ultimately being able to find an appropriate situational solution.

So, practices by other coaches are by definition always designed for another context. Therefore, we need to always adapt them to what may work for our own players. This week, we are looking at an exercise that is geared towards attacking play in the final third. I have used it with different adaptations at various clubs that I have worked with. Below, I will explain the basic set-up and then describe some variations thereof.

Practice setup

In picture 1, we see the basic setup. In this, we have the green team, which is attacking the big goal and the blue team, which looks to counter towards the mini-goals upon winning the ball. The field is divided into 3 areas. The first area is the 3v2 on the left attacking side, and the game starts by the coach playing the ball into this area. In this area, we have a 3v2 in favour of the green attacking team. The green team looks to progress the ball from the 3v2 into the final area, which is the bigger playing area around the box. In this area, we have one green attacker starting against 2 blue defenders; there is no restriction on how the ball can be progressed into this area. The obvious options are to play the ball into the feet of the striker. This can probably be achieved quite quickly. The disadvantage might be that if we play the ball there too quickly that he loses the ball against the 2 central defenders who defend them aggressively and can then easily score in the central mini-goal.

The other option is to enter the final area through a dribble from one of the players in the 3v2. This might take a bit longer



to create in the initial area; however is a more controlled way to enter the final area and therefore makes the follow-up defensive action more challenging due to the unpredictability. Another option is to play a chipped ball to a player running in from the far side 3v2. This player might be outside the field of attention of the central defenders of blue, who are paying most attention to the ball in the 3v2 and perhaps the striker who is moving in front of them to receive a short pass. This moment can be achieved nicely when the ball is passed backwards from the side to the lowest player in the 3v2. Now this anchor player, similar to a 6 in the normal game, has time to look up and play a chipped pass. Furthermore, it is normal for defensive lines to pump out and attempt to take up a higher position as soon as a ball is played backwards. This can be exploited beautifully with deep runs from a lower starting position, especially from the far side.

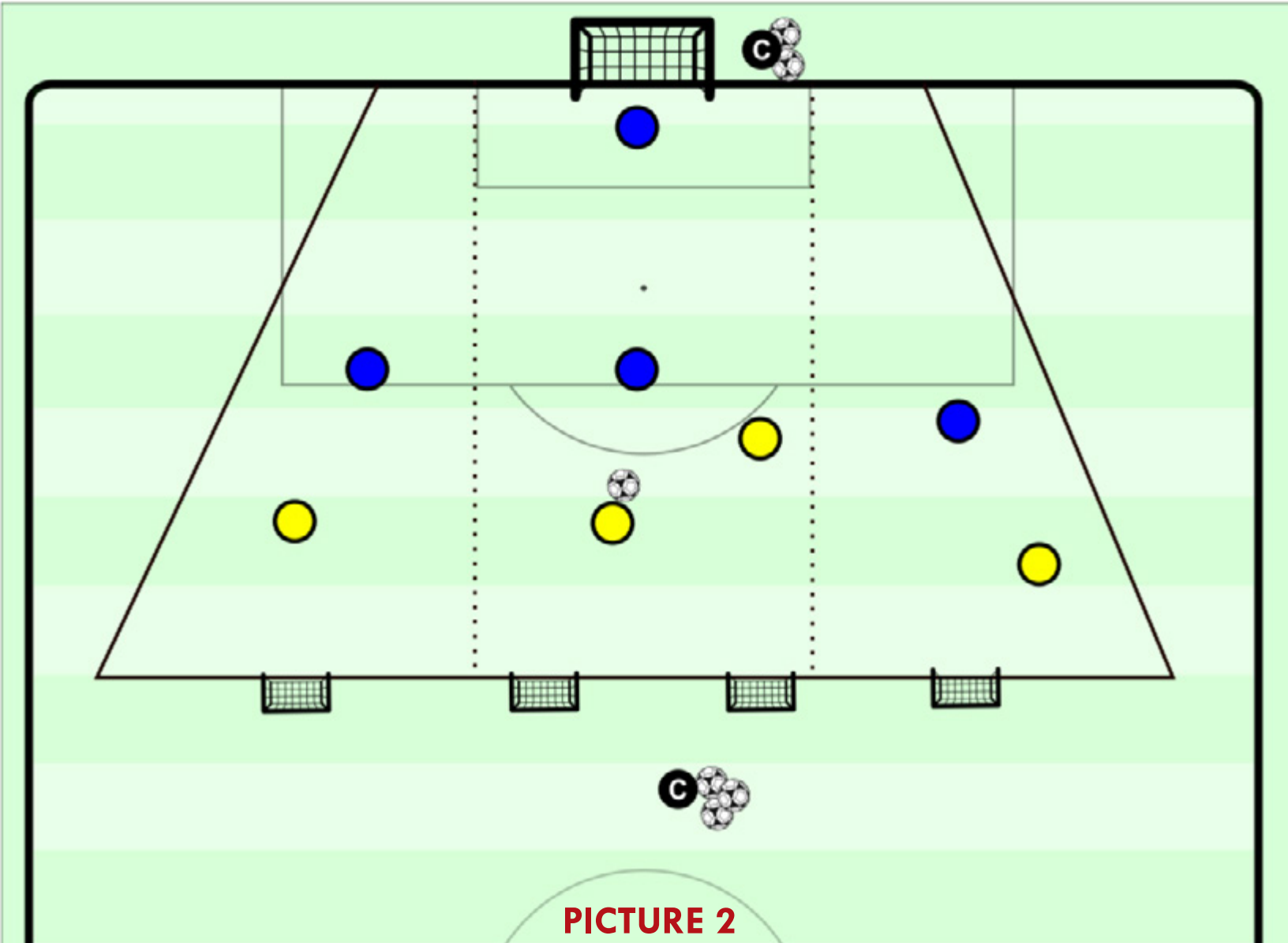
In Picture 2, we see how the game progresses from the initial 3v2 into a 4v3 when the ball enters the final area. Two attacking green players from the initial 3v2 join dynamically in the final area, and one of the two blue defenders is allowed to track back to support the centre backs in the final playing area. And on top of that, we have the one attacker from the far side joining that I talked about initially. Picture 2 also shows a typical ground-based combination that can be played for green entering the final playing area. If blue wins the ball back at any time, they have the opportunity to counterattack towards any of the mini goals. In this moment, green needs to counter-press to win the ball back. All

zonal restrictions are now lifted, and all players, even if they didn't attack in the 4v3, can join to win the ball back (and perhaps score afterwards).

The main idea when coaching this game is the different attacking and combinative possibilities in the final third. When do we speed the game up? How do we stay in tempo? When do we start runs behind the opposition's defence, and how do we integrate passing and dribbling in a way that they accentuate each other? It is important here to guide the players instead of giving them exact patterns of play that they have to follow at all times. Because the practice is quite positional, it can be really helpful for players to learn about each other's movements and timings. Perhaps also introducing the concept of positional pairs when attacking, and how movements need to be complementary to one another.

When the ball goes out of play, the game is restarted in the 3v2 on the other side, with the same possibilities of getting into the final area and a 4v3 there. A few possible variations of this practice would be to allow more players into the final playing area upon the moment of entry.

For example, going from a 3v2 into a 5v4 might be a nice way to progress the practice. Alternatively, we could also play it as a free game and allow anyone and everyone to join then. I have also played the game before with different positions of the mini goals and have also added a neutral player in the gap between the two 3v2 areas, who can be used as an extra supporting option on combination play.



**FIRST DEPOSIT MATCH**
R20 000

**BET WITH THE BEST**

T&C's APPLY. Operator Licensed by the Gauteng Gambling and Racing Board. No person under the age of 18 permitted to gamble. National Responsible Gambling Program Toll Free Counselling Line 0800 006 008 or via Whatsapp HELP to 076 675 0710. Winners know when to stop.