



'MBOKAZI DOES SPECIAL THINGS, RELE STEPS UP IN BIG GAMES'



MOJELA: WE WANT TO COME BACK WITH MTN8 GOLD MEDAL



BAFANA TO FACE FIVE-TIME WORLD CHAMPIONS?



LIBYAN GIANTS SEND OFFICIALS TO JHB FOR SHALULILE TALKS



ARE CHIEFS DONE SIGNING AFTER MAYO COUP?



DE SA HAILS OUADDOU, MAKES VELEBAYI & BAARTMAN PREDICTION

THE DRAWING BOARD WITH MORITZ KOSSMANN & ACE OF THE WEEK

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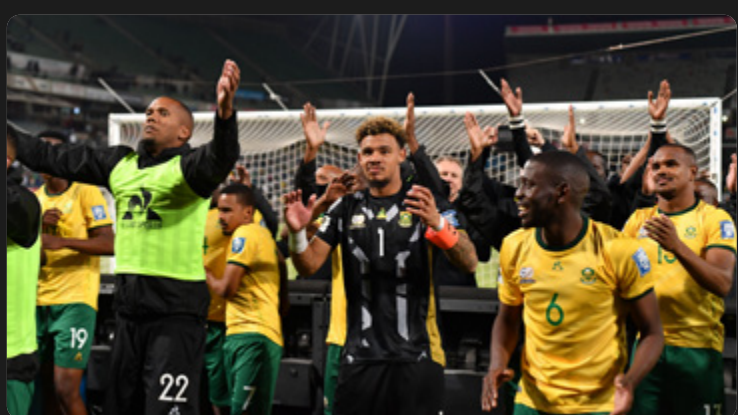
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AL ITTIHAD NOT GIVING UP ON SHALULILE?

Libyan giants Al Ittihad are not giving up their chase for Mamelodi Sundowns legend Peter Shalulile despite the player suggesting he will remain at the club. Club officials travelled to Johannesburg in a late attempt to secure the deal with Sundowns, who are now reportedly not open to the sale of the PSL record goalscorer at this stage of the window. While they are working on other backup options, sources at the club confirmed Masandawana are also in talks with the player for a potential new contract



CITY PLAYER SURFACES AT CASRIC

Lefa Aphane's time at Cape Town City looks to have drawn to a close, with the 23-year-old winger set for a fresh start at Motsepe Foundation Championship outfit Casric Stars. After making the switch from Tzaneen United, Aphane found opportunities hard to come by in the Citizens' first team, managing just three league appearances in the top flight last season. He was included on the bench for City's opening fixture in the second tier this term, but it now appears he has moved on in search of regular football, and could soon be lining up against his former club as part of one of their MFC rivals.



BRAZIL LINING UP BAFANA FRIENDLY?

Brazil are believed to have set their sights on Bafana Bafana for a potential high-profile friendly in November. The five-time world champions are lining up clashes against African opposition as part of their build-up to next year's FIFA World Cup, and South Africa are among the nations on their radar. Reports out of Egypt suggest the Pharaohs have already declined the offer, leaving SAFA in discussions with the Brazilians alongside Tunisia and Morocco. If the deal goes through, it would mark a rare and glamorous showdown as both teams sharpen their blades for bigger battles ahead.



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IS MAYO THE FINAL PIECE IN THE CHIEFS PUZZLE?

Khanyisa Mayo has finally landed at Naturena, becoming Kaizer Chiefs’ 11th signing of what has been a whirlwind 2025/26 transfer window — and perhaps the final piece in Nasreddine Nabi’s ambitious rebuild.

Mayo, a long-time target for Amakhosi, joins on loan from Algerian giants CR Belouizdad, with the club officially confirming his capture last Friday. The move has generated plenty of excitement, with many viewing the Bafana Bafana forward as the kind of attacking spark that could elevate Chiefs to genuine contenders.

The son of former Chiefs star Patrick Mayo has often spoken of his desire to play for the club, and now he will get to live out that childhood dream.

Chiefs have already started the season in formidable fashion, unbeaten after five Betway Premiership matches and yet to concede a single goal.

Interestingly, several of their new recruits are still waiting in the wings. The debuts of

Asanele Velebayi and Luke Baartman remain delayed by the ongoing legal dispute with Cape Town Spurs, though their absence has opened the door for others to step forward.

Also waiting for his debut is Nigerian striker Etiosa Ighodaro, who could soon be registered as a local player after completing his residency requirements, a move that would free up a valuable foreign slot should Nabi wish to use it later.

While reports suggested the club was also shopping for a goalkeeper, Brandon Petersen’s record-breaking start — five clean sheets in five games, appears to have put that search on ice.

For now, the sense around Naturena is that business may finally be done, though there may still be a few of their players sent out on loan. The cheque book isn’t locked away completely, but unless a golden opportunity arises, Mayo could well be the last incoming signature of a transformative window, and perhaps the one that defines it.

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TSO: WE ARE CLOSE TO THE WORLD CUP DREAM

Bafana Bafana are on the brink of qualification for the FIFA World Cup after moving to 16 points after their victory over Lesotho, giving them a five-point gap over their chasers with three matches to play.

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.

'Thalente Mbatha Has Improved So Much'

"First, let me give a huge compliment to Bafana Bafana midfielder Thalente Mbatha. He has improved so much. He passes the ball forward. He opens up space for himself and defends when the team needs him.

"Sometimes it sounds like we are bashing players, but this is the kind of improvement we are always looking for.

"Well done to Bafana Bafana for beating Lesotho. It was a very good performance. It reminded me of the shoe shine and piano style that Sundowns is known for.

"We are getting closer to the dream of qualifying for the FIFA World Cup, and that's what we need to do as a country.

"I did not think that Sipho Mbule would play because he was called up to replace Tito Maswanganyi. They gave him a chance, and he grabbed it with both hands.

"He is a quality player and I'm very excited to see him at the national team.

"Congratulations to Bafana Bafana. We are edging closer to the dream."



‘NO DOUBT THAT JUST ABOUT EVERYONE WILL BACK BUCS TO WIN’

By Matshelane Mamabolo

DAINE KLATE remembers it like it was yesterday, even though the memories are from a decade-and-a-half ago.

As Orlando Pirates prepare to extend their MTN8 success to a record-extending fourth successive season in a row, the highly decorated winger, who has since retired from playing the game, is taken back to that glorious evening at the Moses Mabhida Stadium when he led the Buccaneers to success in the same competition.

Klate, now coach of Durban City’s DStv Diski Challenge team, was on the mark as Pirates drew 1-1 with Moroka Swallows in the 2010 MTN8 final before they

triumphed 4-2 via the shoot-out from the penalty spot.

“I’m just amazed at how many years have gone by so quickly because I still have vivid memories of that final,” Klate says during our interview. “I remember calling my mom after that match and telling her, ‘Mommy, I was brave to step up and take that penalty under such pressure conditions in a packed stadium’. And my mom said to me, ‘Of course, you are brave’. I even took the first penalty in the shoot-out.”

Is he brave enough to call the outcome of Saturday’s final between his former club and Stellenbosch FC to be played at the Mbombela Stadium?

“Hahaha, cup finals are very tight matches to call; they can always go either way, and this one won’t be different.”

Klate is hopeful the final will be clean this time around, unlike last year’s win, which turned in Pirates’ favour thanks to a second Buccaneers goal scored after a free-kick taken quickly and from the wrong spot while the Stellenbosch players were still protesting.

“Everyone – particularly Stellies – will remember that final for that free-kick which was taken some 20 meters from where it should have been, and Stellies no doubt felt hard done by it. I think we all are looking forward to a clean final with no controversial decisions because if we can avoid those, I think we are in for a memorable match.”

He admits, though, that Pirates will start as favourites given that they are the holders and by their sheer squad strength and pedigree. He wants, though, that nothing should be taken for granted.

“Both teams can win it, and of course, Stellies can cause an upset. But they are the underdogs, and I am in no doubt that just about everyone will back Pirates to win, and I agree, given j u s t how good a team they are. We are in for an interesting game, though, because on their day, Stellenbosch can beat anyone.”

What is it about Pirates, though, that he sees as going to help them win a fourth successive title?

“We’ve all seen how Pirates have been the dominating team in cup competitions in recent seasons, and they have really come good in the past four/five years. They’ve even gotten closer to [Mamelodi] Sundowns in the league, and the signs are promising that they are catching up.

“A PLAYER LIKE MBOKAZI IS DOING SPECIAL THINGS, AND RELE HAS SHOWN HIS CLASS.”





“Even though they’ve changed coaches, they remain a very good team. Yes, when the new coach came in, there was a bit of, I want to call it period of uncertainty as the players were getting used to him.

“That takes time, but things have been positive for them so far, because the coach appears very articulate and specific in what he wants out of the team. He seems very organised and is close to coach [Jose] Riveiro [his predecessor] – it’s like Pirates got a similar coach to the previous one in that they both appear to have the same ideas on modern tactics and how the game moves.”

Klate likes that Abdeslam Ouaddou has played the game at the highest level.

“He is a former player who competed at the highest level and has got the experience of playing in the Champions League. From the outside looking in, things look positive at Pirates.”

The injection of new blood into the squad has only served to strengthen the Buccaneers, Klate believes.

“The new players, I think, the majority of them come from sound development, hence they’ve not had a problem settling in. Yes, there were concerns about Siphso Mbule’s discipline, but that’s not something new, and hopefully he will get to remain level-headed because he is a brilliant player.

“At Pirates, people expect certain behaviour out of their players, and whatever you are doing, you’re always under the microscope. And it’s exciting to see the young players making the impact that they are.

“A player like [Mbekezeli] Mbokazi is doing special things, and Rele [Relebohile Mofokeng] has shown his class. I think Rele understands the role he can play in any match, more so in big ones like the cup final. He and the rest of the team should be aware that if the team performs collectively, then

“BOTH TEAMS CAN WIN IT, AND OF COURSE, STELLIES CAN CAUSE AN UPSET. BUT THEY ARE THE UNDERDOGS, AND I AM IN NO DOUBT THAT JUST ABOUT EVERYONE WILL BACK PIRATES TO WIN.”

the individuals will stand out more.”

Given that there are a few players in the squad playing in their maiden final for the Buccaneers, how does Klate foresee them fairing?

“I think where the new ones are lucky is that they are surrounded by players who have been there and done that. So they will have guidance and will not be overwhelmed by the occasion.

“At Pirates, you get taught that there is good pressure and bad pressure in the game. You hardly experience bad pressure at Pirates because bad pressure comes from fighting against relegation. Good pressure is wanting to win trophies, and you learn to handle that at Pirates.

“They have won the MTN8 the last three seasons, and they will go on to the pitch as favourites and with the belief that they can win the trophy yet again.”

Football, though, is fickle at the top, Klate warns.

“Anything can happen in cup finals. It is the brave ones who will win,” he says, the memories of his bravery way back in 2010 when he helped Pirates to lift their first MTN8 title clearly flooding back.

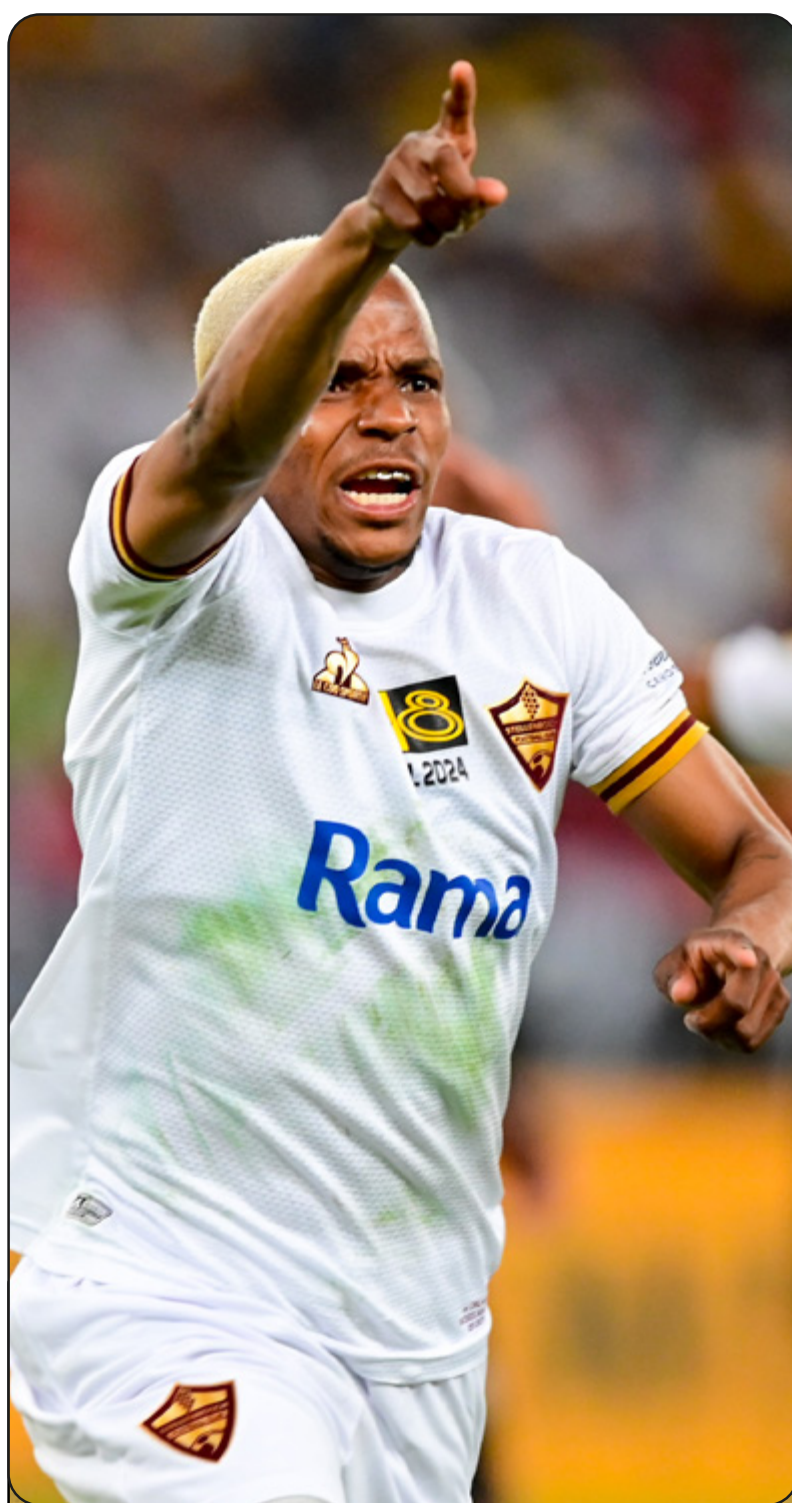




MOJELA BACK FOR STELLIES & READY TO SOAR

LEHLOHONOLO BRADLEY MOJELA was a name on everyone's lips in South African football 12 months ago. He rose from relative obscurity in amateur football at Shumba Football Development to the top-flight in the space of five years via stints with Platinum City Rovers, TS Sporting, and Casric Stars before joining TS Galaxy. He made an immediate impact as a diminutive number nine, which led to a transfer to Stellenbosch FC, and his six goals in his first nine games – including Stellies goal in last year's MTN8 final – saw calls for a Bafana Bafana call-up for the 27-year-old. But just as things were looking up, he was struck down by a serious knee injury he picked up in training. It required surgery, and he missed the remainder of the 2024/25 season. iDiski Times Senior Journalist **LORENZ KÖHLER** met up with the explosive forward, who is gradually working his way back to full match fitness, to find out how he coped during an extended period on the sidelines and whether he can replicate the form that had him banging on the national team door a year ago. Just a fortnight ago, he was handed his first start of the season under Steve Barker, a milestone that marked the beginning of his comeback. Now, he finds himself right back in the thick of things, playing a key role in helping the club secure yet another place in the MTN8 final. It's a familiar stage for Barker's side, who have once again earned the right to challenge Orlando Pirates in a repeat of last season's showdown — and for Mojela, it's a chance to prove he truly belongs on nights of this magnitude. iDiski Times Editor **ROB DELPORT** also caught up briefly with Mojela to add some MTN8 Final flavour.

Lorenz Köhler: Bradley, thank you for taking your time to speak to me, I appreciate it. You've been looking stronger and good as the new season



“WE’RE GOING ALL OUT IN THIS YEAR’S FINAL. WE WANNA MAKE SURE WE COME BACK WITH THAT GOLD MEDAL!”

gets underway. How are you feeling after this long-term injury?

Lehlohonolo Mojela: I'm very excited because it's been a long while without playing football, I'm happy to be back, to get the feeling of the grass, and I'm just hoping to get back to scoring goals as I make my return.



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LK: You had a great start to life at Stellenbosch, scoring at will, you were on fire – how frustrating was it to go from that level to watching from the sidelines for the rest of the season?

LM: Eish, it was depressing! Without the right support, you would end up hating yourself, but I was supported by my family and my teammates, especially Sanele Barns. He has been supporting me throughout my injury. He was very important in this process, always pushing me, saying, ‘Boy, don’t give up, you will come back, we still need you in the team’. It helped, because he saw me being down in camp... But he said I shouldn’t worry. But, me and Barns, we have been friends since 2018, not just at Stellenbosch, he’s like a brother to me.

LK: In this process, what did you do to keep your spirits high?

LM: I was always on TikTok! Doing Lives [broadcasts]! People on TikTok know me from those Lives, yeah. I was engaging with people and not trying to think about the injury too much, to take my mind off things. So TikTok really helped me.

LK: You’re back, but there’s now more competition up front – Ashley Cupido did well in your absence. How are you feeling about this new season?

LM: I just want to continue where I left off before I got injured. And on the competition part, it’s good to have competition, so you don’t become too relaxed. I will bring energy, dedication and hard work. I will help the team

“I DON’T DRINK COKE ANYMORE, ONLY WATER AND JUICE... SO WE’RE ALL HEALTHY HERE. IT’S A BIG DIFFERENCE, COMING FROM CLUBS WITH NO GYM...”

where it matters most [scoring goals].

LK: The team is back in Africa with the CAF Confederation Cup, which you missed the business end of, something to be excited about?

LM: The campaign of CAF, they told me it was difficult, but when you get chances, you must bury those chances. I watched all the games, and there are areas where I can help the team for sure. We want to go further now. We saw it wasn’t really that difficult to get to the semi-finals, just minor mistakes, but we will fix it this season, and maybe we can come back with the Confederation Cup this season.

LK: You have a core group, not much chopping and changing, a consistent technical team – does it benefit you as a player coming back to coach Steve [Barker], coach Wes [Sergel] and the rest of the squad?

LM: Yes, it benefits us because you know that in the next season there’s not much changes, only a couple of players who come in and they adapt fast to the new system, so that’s why the team always does well, they don’t change too much too quickly.

LK: Bafana Bafana preliminary call-ups were also coming when you



were in that blistering form...

LM: My main focus is now becoming better and being where I was, maybe more than where I was before my injury. I just need to help the team, not focus on anything else. Coming to this club changed everything. My eating habits changed, I don't drink Coke anymore, only water and juice... So we're all healthy here, we're able to give 100% on the field all the time. It's a big difference, coming from clubs with no gym, here everything allows us to be stronger. I felt a big difference here, I don't feel like I'm getting tired during games, I'm much fitter...

ROB DELPORT: I know that defeat hurt, but you also scored in last year's final. What's your memory of that goal and that moment?

LM: You know, the goal I scored in last year's final was very special, because it was a world-class goal. But we ended up losing the match, which also brought pain to me and my teammates. So I sometimes try to forget that goal, because it brings pain to me.

RD: A lot has changed at both Stellies and Pirates in just a year; does that add even more intrigue to the game?

LM: Yes, and there's been a lot of changes between the two teams, so it's going to be an interesting final. Because, yeah, we're going all out in this year's final. We wanna make sure we come back with that gold medal!

RD: Playing at Mbombela Stadium? You know that venue better than others...

LM: Playing in Mbombela Stadium is like playing at home, because I've scored some goals in Mbombela. I've created a few. So I'll be looking to add a goal or an assist to my stats in Mbombela Stadium.

RD: And sold out already! What can the fans expect? Any message to the



“THE GOAL I SCORED IN LAST YEAR’S FINAL WAS VERY SPECIAL, BECAUSE IT WAS A WORLD-CLASS GOAL. BUT WE ENDED UP LOSING THE MATCH, WHICH ALSO BROUGHT PAIN TO ME AND MY TEAMMATES. SO I SOMETIMES TRY TO FORGET THAT GOAL.”

Stellies supporters?

LM: The fans can expect an interesting game. They'll be up on their seats until the final whistle has blown. And my message to the Stellies supporters is to keep on supporting us, and we'll make sure we work hard to bring back the trophy to Stellenbosch.

RD: Thanks Bradley, and all the best for the final!



**It's Wafa
Wafa season**





LETLAPA SHARES BAFANA & UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE DREAMS

Sekhukhune United defender VUYO LETLAPA is only in his second season in the Betway Premiership, and he is already a force to be reckoned with, having cemented his place at his club with his performances. He has played all of Sekhukhune's league matches this season, helping the Limpopo side to stay in first position on the log as one of the only two unbeaten sides so far. The 22-year-old is also catching the eye of the national team selectors, having been part of the COSAFA Cup squad in 2025 and also making the preliminary squad for the 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifiers against Lesotho and Nigeria in September. This is something he tells iDiski Times writer LETHABO KGANYAGO in this edition that has motivated him to up his game. Letlapa also speaks about the heartbreak of being eliminated from the MTN8, a tournament Babina Noko had hoped to go all the way in for the first time in their history. The left-back also touches on maintaining focus and not getting distracted by interest elsewhere.

Lethabo Kganyago: Vuyo, we appreciate your time. What do you make of the team's start to the season?

Vuyo Letlapa: It's not bad. Before we started the season, we had a deal with the coach that we have to collect at least 13 out of these 15 points, and we

managed to accomplish that mission. So I think we bode ourselves pretty well coming from a loss in the MTN8, but I think now we have to focus on the league. As we say, 13 out of 15, we did quite well, and we are still looking forward to collecting more points.

LK: How painful was it to be eliminated from the MTN8?

VL: It was a sad moment for us, the whole team, because, like we said before the start of the season, we had our mission that we should at least reach the final. But unfortunately, we were knocked out as we lost away 2-0 and drew 1-1 at home. But I think we have learned from our mistakes. That was a lesson, and I think we bounced back pretty well, and I think we still have a lot to show and that we are capable of winning at least one trophy this season.

LK: How important is it to keep your head on the ground as a group while also still maintaining ambitions?

VL: I think that goes with character like as we spoke as a team as a whole, that we need to show character despite not being in the headlines about being on top and stuff. But now I think we should just maintain our record of not losing at home and collecting as much points



as we can. And I think we are going to maintain our record pretty well. I believe in the team, I think we have quite the numbers that will deal with the collecting of points. It's a mission that I think we can accomplish.

LK: For you, this is only your second season in the professional ranks. How do you compare it with the last one?

VL: I can say the pressure has been there since the first season. Like I said before, it goes along with character and discipline and everything. So I think if we maintain ourselves like we finished fourth last season, now we're hoping to at least be in the top three. With the second season now in the PSL, I think there's still more to learn because each and every game we have to learn, and I think we still have a lot to learn. I believe we'll continue winning, and with the team that I have, it will also help me grow as a player.

LK: You have tasted international football at the COSAFA level and you are knocking on the senior team door, having been in the preliminary squad for the World Cup qualifiers. How important is that for you?

VL: It is important for me, like I've been there before, and I'm still hoping to go again, and I'll continue to raise my hand because there is still the AFCON and more qualifier games. I have made it into the preliminary squad and did not make the final 23-man squad, so I think of it as a lesson for me also to continue working hard. I think the coach has seen what I'm like, and I believe that this helped me as a player also to see where I can improve. I got a taste of it, and hopefully next time I'll be in the 23 squad.

“BEFORE WE STARTED THE SEASON, WE HAD A DEAL WITH THE COACH THAT WE HAVE TO COLLECT AT LEAST 13 OUT OF THESE 15 POINTS, AND WE MANAGED TO ACCOMPLISH THAT MISSION.”

LK: The performances that you had last season not only had eyes on you from the national team, but we have also read about the interest from local clubs and some from abroad. What does that mean for you to get so much interest?

VL: Interest will always be there as long as you perform well. So until you have signed for that particular team that says it has interest in you, I think I should just focus on the contract that I have here and keep on playing. I'm still under contract with Sekhukhune, so I have to be at my best at all times until the deal is done. That's when I can focus on the next mission, which would be the new team, if the move happens.

LK: And then lastly, what are your personal goals, not just for the season but for your career as well?

VL: My goals, I think they're similar to other players, but I think I have to be unique. I still believe that my dream is to play in the Champions League in Europe, and be one of the players that are recognised in the history of South African football. I want to leave a legacy in terms of football, and I still believe I will when the time is right.

LK: Thank You, Vuyo.





DE SA ON OMAN JOB & WHY PIRATES ARE MTN8 FAVOURITES

ROGER DE SA has taken on a coaching gig with yet another national team, this time Oman, where he will once again work as an assistant to Carlos Queiroz. It is De Sa's sixth national team job after he'd been on the benches of all of South Africa, Portugal, Iran, Egypt, Qatar and now Oman. Just this past week, De Sa and Oman participated in the CAFA Cup, where they made it into the third-place play-off, with De Sa taking charge of and winning the match against Turkmenistan with head coach Queiroz suspended. iDiski Times' senior writer, MATSHELANE MAMABOLO, spoke to the Mozambican-born De Sa about the experience and even canvassed his views on the upcoming MTN8 final involving his former club, Orlando Pirates.

MATSHELANE MAMABOLO: Roger, Congratulations on your latest appointment. Carlos Queiroz always calls you up to help him with national teams. This latest one came just as you had joined Cape Town Spurs. Are your bags always ready to go when he calls?

ROGER DE SA: Hahaha, thanks man. Ja well, Carlos always calls me. We've developed a working relationship which he enjoys. Obviously, he trusts me and he believes in the work that I do. We've got a good understanding. It's great to have a coach of his calibre, one of the most successful international coaches, if not the most successful, apparently, who calls me and gives me so much work to do and responsibilities. The learning experiences I've had are second to none.

MM: And you are adding to them with this latest national team, Oman. It is your sixth one – the most by any South African. You must feel somewhat special and blessed.

RD: You are right, this is country number six for me. I think about it, and it is kind of crazy – I started off

as a young Mozambican immigrant coming to South Africa and dreamt of representing South Africa and then going on to singing six national anthems. It's a crazy experience. Who would have known? Now the journey continues. It's been awesome, and the main thing is the different people, the different nationalities I meet. It is special to make friends all over the world, and the memories I make, I always take with me.

MM: You've been involved in numerous World Cup qualifiers, which must be special. And the national anthems, do you already know the Oman one? And the previous ones, did you know them?

RD: How many World Cup qualifiers? I've been to a lot of games in different competitions all over the world. I've done the Asia Cup, the America Cup, the Arab Cup, and we are now in the CAFA Cup. There have been so many competitions, I really don't know. Every time we have an international game, it is always a special moment. Singing the Oman national anthem? I've heard it a few times, but I can't sing it yet; it will take some time. I recognise the anthems of all the countries I've worked in, though, and they all bring back special memories.

MM: The CAFA Cup was a good competition for you guys as you got into the third-place play-off. Your first official match in charge was a draw with Uzbekistan. What were the preparations for that like, given you guys did not have a lot of time with the team before the match?

RD: We drew the first match against Uzbekistan, yes, which is one of the powers in this competition, although to be honest, we could have won and actually should have won that match. We had plenty of opportunities, but scoring goals has been one of our problems. But we are creating numerous chances, and I am sure you



saw we went on to win our next two matches convincingly. And we could have scored a handful of goals in both matches. We were just disappointed that we did not win the first one because we missed out on the final on goal difference.

MM: And then the match against Kyrgyzstan was pure drama... to win it the way you guys did – tell me about that experience?

RD: Ja, we battled on. It was a game that we felt we were in control of, even when we conceded first. Before the tournament, the guys showed character, and we made some changes, and those who came on continued to create opportunities, and we eventually got the equaliser. Once we got that, the opponents collapsed. It was a great feeling to win the game in injury time, and we have now done it twice [also against Turkmenistan], and that shows that the work we put in the long training camp in Turkey for 10 days, getting the guys through some hard work, getting them up and ready for it is starting to show, which is fantastic.

MM: And then you got to be in charge against Turkmenistan with Carlos suspended. Talk to me about that experience?

RD: I was on the bench in charge of the team in the last game, but you know what it is like with today’s technology – I had the coach in my ear. It was just a quick fix getting me on the bench because, at the end, it’s still the work of a technical team anyway. But it was fantastic to be able to do that and get a win [2-1]. Now, after this competition, we will go back to Muscat and start preparing for the World Cup qualifiers, and we are really going to be up against it. It is going to be really difficult, but that’s what we are really here for, and we will see how it is going. We are going to keep the flag flying.

MM: Your performances in the CAFA

“CARLOS ALWAYS CALLS ME. WE’VE DEVELOPED A WORKING RELATIONSHIP WHICH HE ENJOYS. OBVIOUSLY, HE TRUSTS ME AND HE BELIEVES IN THE WORK THAT I DO.”

Cup must give you and Carlos confidence for the upcoming World Cup qualifiers in October. You are playing against Qatar and the UAE. Are those matches you believe can be won?

RD: The World Cup qualifiers will be really tough. We are playing Qatar and the UAE, and it is very unfortunate that FIFA decided we have to play such a crucial match in Qatar and the UAE as well. It really makes it difficult, but we are definitely going to give it a go and do our best. We know a little bit about Qatar, and hopefully, we still have enough in our tank to make a good match of it and give ourselves a realistic chance. It’s always going to be difficult, but we certainly believe it should have been on neutral grounds, but it is FIFA rules, and there’s nothing we can do about that. It is what it is.

MM: As I said, you were with Cape Town Spurs when Carlos called. Tell me about the Spurs experience, short-lived as it was. What was the plan there?

RD: There was a bit of a plan in place. I had a few meetings with Ari [Efsthathiou, the chairman]. It is sad to see a club like that, with those facilities – the best in the country if not on the continent – not being used to its full capacity and potential. And those were the discussions we had, to see how we can fulfil that potential. Unfortunately, it fell slightly short at the time the opportunity [to join Carlos] came up. But Ari understood. And this could probably be a short-term thing, but it had to be done. Spurs will





always be there, and hopefully one day we can still get it going again. Let's see how it goes. Spurs is a club that's close to my heart because we had successes there and many young boys who were developed in a short space of time. I think the country needs that development anyway.

MM: Some of those young boys have got the country abuzz, Luke Baartman and Asanele Velebayi, the talk of the football fraternity after they joined Kaizer Chiefs. Are these boys as exciting as they are made out to be, and can they crack it at Chiefs with all the big pressure that comes with that club?

RD: The boys that joined Chiefs from the club, I honestly don't know much about them, but I watched them play a few times, but I don't know them personally. Yet, I believe they will probably get even better playing at a higher level, having moved to a top league and surrounded by quality players. They will do pretty well. And I believe they will crack it because they came through with very good grounding at Spurs. We've seen players who came through that development, mostly from the previous Ajax set-up, making it in the past, and these ones won't be any different, and they will go on to be top players in our country.

MM: So, your former club, Orlando Pirates, is looking to win a fourth successive MTN8 title this coming weekend. Have you seen them under their new coach, Abdeslam Ouaddou, and what's your impression?

RD: Pirates being in the top eight final is par for the course now. They are a top cup team that always competes and always does well. They've put together and they've got a good coach who did well in his previous club and certainly deserves the patience of the fans and the opportunity to lead the club. I think he is the real deal; they must give him time, and he'll do well for sure. Pirates have got to be the favourites in this final. The question is, can they compete with [Mamelodi] Sundowns in the league? They have

“I THINK OUADDOU IS THE REAL DEAL; THEY MUST GIVE HIM TIME, AND HE’LL DO WELL FOR SURE.”

definitely narrowed the gap, but are they good enough to see out the league? I am not sure they can win the league, but the cup competition for sure.

MM: What are their chances of beating Stellies yet again after last year's controversial win?

RD: Of course, they can beat them again. Stellies have not had the best start, but they are still a very good cup team, and it will be a close and exciting final.

MM: Stellies under Steve Barker are always solid despite continuously losing players season in and season out. What are they doing right?

RD: What Steve has done is fantastic, and we've got to respect that. Stellies is a stable club with massive financial backing, but it is not just an open cheque book; it is run like a business and done very well. Steve comes from Tuks [University of Pretoria] and has got his feet well on the ground. His understanding of development football has been great. It's fantastic to see what they are doing, and hopefully they will continue.

MM: Thanks for making time, Roger, and all the best out there in Oman. Make South Africa proud.

RD: Thank you. See you when I am back at home.



WHO WILL BE THE MTN8 LAST MAN STANDING?

The first piece of silverware in the new season is up for grabs this weekend, as Orlando Pirates and Stellenbosch FC collide in the MTN8 final at Mbombela Stadium. While the venue has shifted, the script feels familiar — it's a repeat of last year's showpiece. Back then, Pirates walked away with the trophy after a finish that Stellenbosch still feel ended in controversy. This time around, Steve Barker's Stellies are desperate for redemption, determined to write a different ending to the story.

Yet, much has changed over the past 12 months. The Buccaneers arrive under the guidance of a new man at the helm, Abdeslam Ouaddou, who replaced Jose Riveiro at the start of the season. But Ouaddou's preparations have been anything but smooth, with a cloud hanging over the club after he and members of his technical team were hospitalised in a traffic accident. Their recovery has gone hand-in-hand with ensuring the squad is mentally and physically ready for the big occasion. On the pitch, however, the MTN8 has delivered fireworks. With 24 goals across the quarter-finals and semi-finals, the tournament has already showcased its attacking flair. Pirates and Stellenbosch have played their part too — Stellies smashing home six goals, while the Sea Robbers have struck four. Both sides know their way to goal, and both have game-breakers capable of turning a final in an instant.

So the stage is set. The sold-out crowd at Mbombela will roar. But the real questions linger: who will rise to the occasion, who will seize the moment, and whose name will be etched into MTN8 history this year?

Kamogelo Sebelebele

If anyone looks capable of overtaking Iqraam Rayners, it's surely Mike Sebelebele. The new Orlando Pirates star has wasted no time making his mark, scoring in both legs of the semi-final against Sundowns and announcing himself as a man for the big occasion.

Since arriving from TS Galaxy, Sebelebele has been riding a rich vein of form, and right now he looks every bit the player Pirates fans hoped he would be: speedy, confident, and ruthless in front of goal. His strikes against Sundowns didn't just

make headlines; they kept Pirates' dream alive of securing a remarkable fourth consecutive MTN8 crown.

Momentum is on his side, and in knockout football, that counts for plenty. Pirates know that if they are to lift the trophy once more, their new talisman will almost certainly have a say. With his current purple patch, it would be brave to bet against him adding his name to the scoresheet again in Mbombela.

Sanele Barns

Sanele Barns might just be the wild card in this year's MTN8 final. The former Richards Bay midfielder lit up the quarter-finals with a statement performance, bagging a brilliant brace in Stellenbosch's 3-2 victory over AmaZulu. It was the sort of display that reminded everyone of his ability to rise to the occasion and tilt a contest in his team's favour.

A couple of untimely niggles disrupted his momentum, forcing him to sit out parts of August. But Barns did come off the bench in the semi-final second leg against Sekhukhune United, giving Stellies a timely boost as they booked their ticket to Mbombela.

Now, with the midfielder hoping to be fully fit and raring to go, the stage





is perfectly set. Just one goal behind Rayners, Barns has the chance to play hero twice over: to fire Barker's side to silverware, and to potentially walk away with individual honours in the process. There's every incentive for the 28-year-old to produce another match-defining performance on the grand stage.

Sipho Chaine

2023's MTN8 Last Man Standing, Sipho Chaine, is once again proving why he's become such a vital cog in the Orlando Pirates machine. His ice-cool heroics in the dramatic penalty-shootout victory over Mamelodi Sundowns didn't just send the Buccaneers into yet another final – they also served as a powerful reminder of the calm authority and big-match temperament he brings between the sticks.

Since staking his claim as Pirates' undisputed number one, Chaine has transformed the club's fortunes at the back and has grown into a figure that defenders trust and strikers fear. In a team brimming with attacking firepower, it's often easy to forget the man guarding the last line. But time and again, Chaine has shown that trophies are just as often won by the goalkeeper as they are by the striker.

As the stage shifts to Mbombela Stadium, all eyes may initially be on the forwards chasing glory, but don't be surprised if it's Chaine who once again steals the spotlight. Whether it's a fingertip save, a penalty hero moment, or simply shutting the door on Stellies' attack, the Pirates keeper has the pedigree to make this final his own.

Iqraam Rayners

The race to be the MTN8 top scorer has taken a twist, and unfortunately for Iqraam Rayners, he won't get the chance to add to his tally. The Bafana Bafana striker, who sits atop the scoring charts with three goals, saw his hopes of playing in the final dashed when Mamelodi Sundowns bowed out in the semi-finals.

The former Stellenbosch star had set the competition alight from the very start. He opened his account in emphatic fashion, grabbing a brace in the quarter-final demolition of Richards Bay.

And in the semi-final second leg against Orlando Pirates, he stepped up again, finding the net to remind everyone of his poacher's instinct.

But now, Rayners must watch from afar. Instead of deciding the trophy on the pitch, he'll be nervously tuning in as the final unfolds at Mbombela Stadium, hoping his rivals fail to surpass his tally. The spotlight shifts to those chasing him – and whether someone can snatch the top scorer bragging rights right from under his nose in the season's first showpiece event. Unfortunately, even if he finishes top scorer, the odds on him winning the Last Man Standing suffer significantly with his team not competing for the honours.

Devin Titus

At just 24, Devin Titus has already carved out a reputation as Stellenbosch's Mr Consistency, the kind of player you can always count on to deliver, no matter the stage or the pressure. He's not just steady, though, he's also one of Barker's most lethal attacking weapons, capable of turning a tight contest on its head with a burst of pace or a moment of precision.

With a goal already to his name in this year's MTN8, Titus heads into the final brimming with confidence, and this stage offers him the perfect chance to showcase just how invaluable he is to his team.

Titus' threat lies in his versatility. Just as comfortable finishing moves as he is creating them, time and again, he's proven to be a nightmare for defenders, slipping into dangerous spaces, stretching backlines, and feeding teammates with clever passes. For Stellenbosch, he's more than just another forward; he's the spark that ignites their attack, the player who makes the system tick.

If Stellenbosch are to finally lift the trophy and avenge last year's heartbreak, much will depend on Titus rising to the occasion. And for Pirates, keeping him quiet won't just be important; it could be the difference between victory and defeat.

Expect Titus to be one of the most closely watched players on the



Mbombela pitch, because if he's allowed even a glimpse of space, he has the ability to punish any defence.

Oswin Appollis

Before Sebelebele's exploits grabbed all the attention, much of the spotlight at Orlando Pirates was firmly on their high-profile new arrival, Oswin Appollis. Signed from Polokwane City in what was one of the most talked-about moves of the window, the Bafana Bafana winger wasted no time justifying the hype. On his very first outing in black and white, he came back to haunt his former club, opening the scoring in the Buccaneers' 2-0 quarter-final victory, a strike that immediately endeared him to the Ghost.

Appollis' style has always been built on flair, energy, and that ability to spark a game into life with a moment of individual brilliance. Now, at 24 years old, he finds himself on the cusp of his biggest domestic occasion yet — his first major cup final in South African football. Finals are where reputations are cemented, and Appollis has long carried the tag of a player who thrives on the big stage.

With the eyes of the nation on Mbombela Stadium, this could be his perfect platform to truly announce himself as a Pirate, to show that the hype around his signature was more than justified, and perhaps even to carve out his own piece of MTN8 history. For a player of his ability, the chance to decide a final feels like destiny waiting to unfold.

Honorary Mentions:

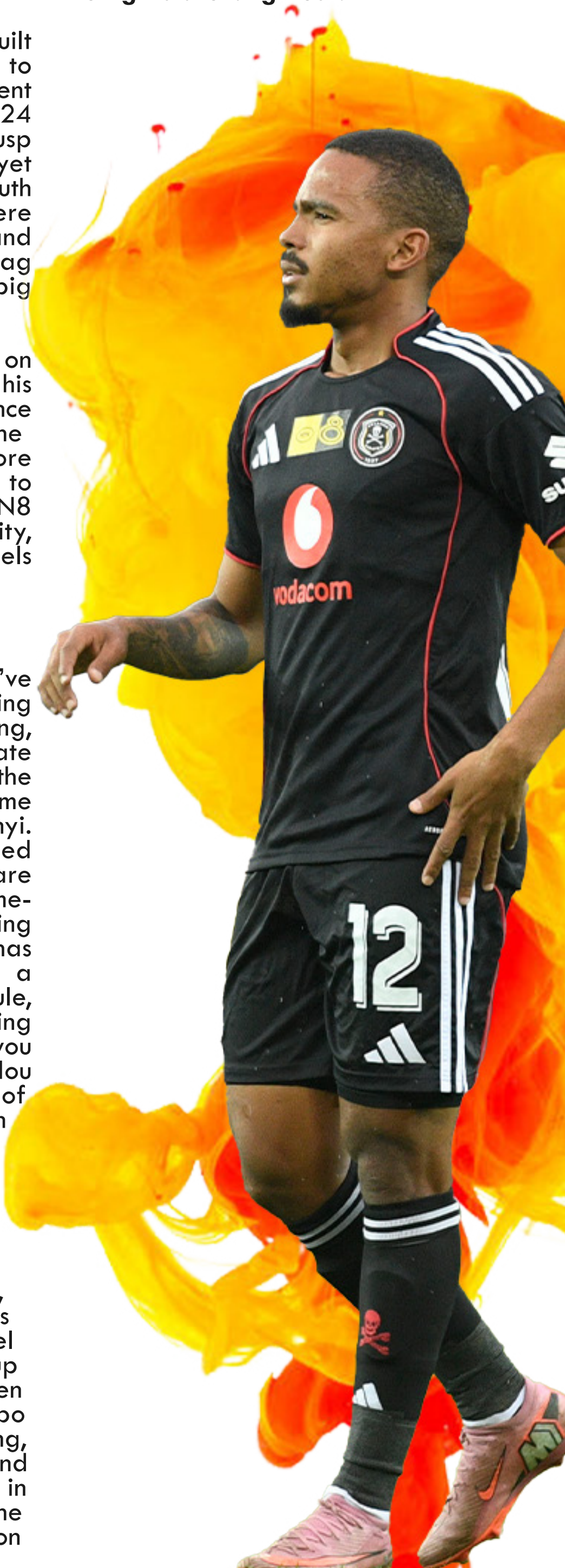
It almost feels strange that we've gone this far without mentioning last season's Last Man Standing, Relebohile Mofokeng, his teammate Deon Hotto, who was also in the running for that accolade, or a game changer like Patrick Maswanganyi. That alone tells you just how spoiled for choice Orlando Pirates are when it comes to potential game-changers. Add to that mix the rising star Mbekezeli Mbokazi, who has been playing with the poise of a seasoned veteran, and Sipho Mbule, one of the club's most eye-catching new recruits, and suddenly you begin to understand why Ouaddou is sitting with a treasure chest of match-winners at his disposal. On any given day, any one of them could seize the moment and write their name across a cup final.

But let's not forget that Barker has his own set of weapons at Stellenbosch. Langelihle Phili, the precocious Amajita star, has already shown nerves of steel in this tournament, popping up with a match-winning strike. Then there's their defensive star Thabo Moloisane, or Andre De Jong, the enterprising New Zealand midfielder, both such vital cogs in the Maroons' side. Between the sticks, Barker can always rely on

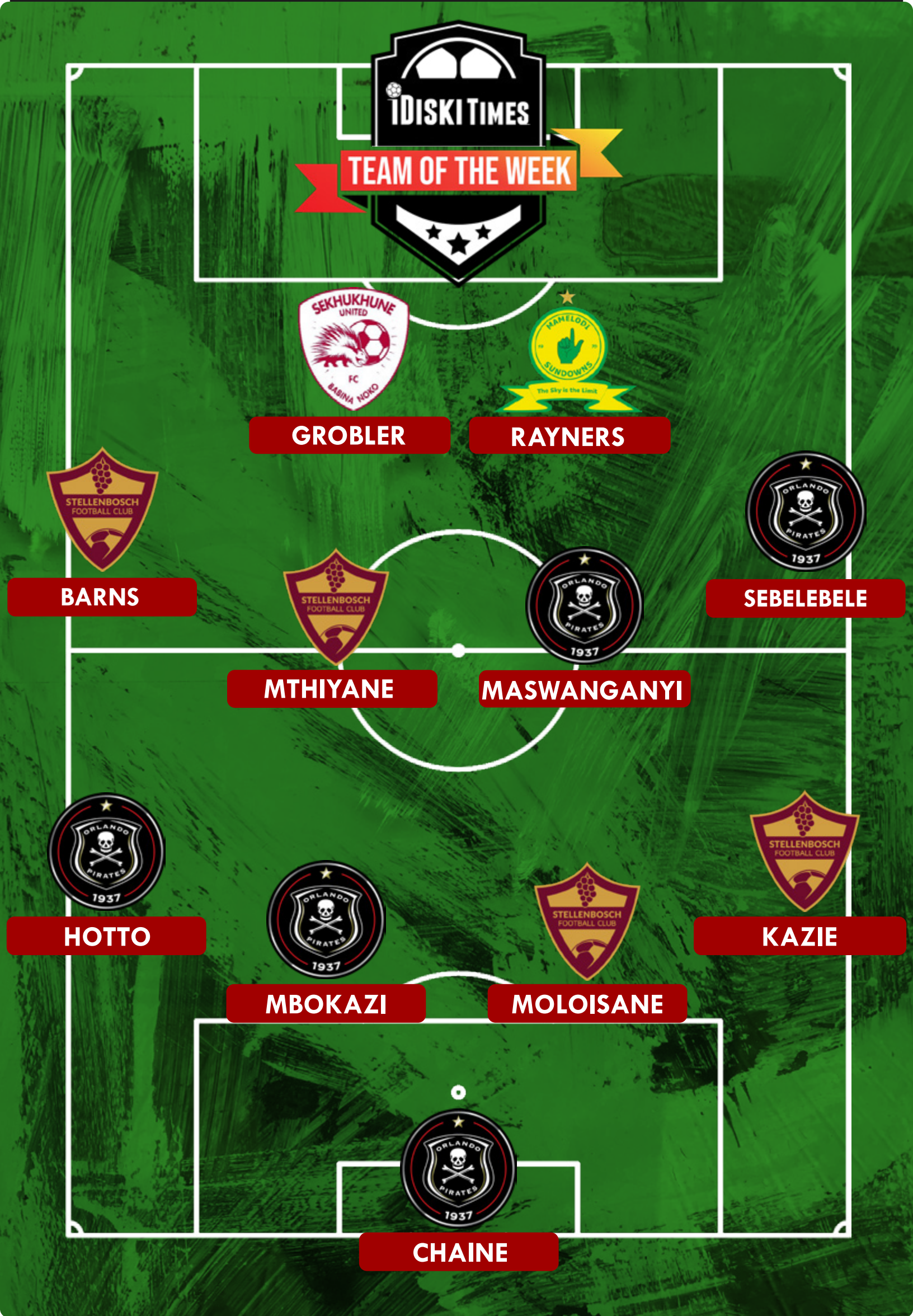
Sage Stephens, a goalkeeper who has built a reputation as one of the league's most consistent performers. And, of course, there's Bradley Mojela — the man who scored in last year's final, now clawing his way back to full fitness after a difficult campaign. His return could not be better timed, and there would be something poetic if he were to once again make his mark on the biggest stage.

With so many potential heroes scattered across both teams, the Mbombela MTN8 final has all the makings of a contest where legacies are forged.

The question is: who will rise when the lights are brightest?



MTN8 - TEAM OF 2025/26



ACE OF THE WEEK:
BAFANA BAFANA

Bafana Bafana are our iDiski Times Aces of the Week after delivering a

commanding 3-0 triumph over Lesotho that edged them closer to the dream of FIFA World Cup qualification. On a lively Friday night, it was Mohau Nkota who stole the early spotlight, netting his first-ever goal in national colours — a moment he'll never forget. Soon after, Lyle Foster continued his fine form, adding the second, before Oswin Appollis scored the third to round off a polished team performance. For Hugo Broos and his boys, it was the kind of performance that sends a message: calm, clinical, and confident. With 16 points from seven games, all eyes now turn to this week's blockbuster clash against Nigeria's Super Eagles.





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.

Zig Zag Game 4v3 into 4v3

Last week, we had the great pleasure to speak to current Mamelodi Sundowns U19 coach Kristopher Bergman. During this column, we got some insight into some of Kris’s favourite practices that coaches can adopt and adapt to their own specific context. This week, we will continue with a practice that is a personal favourite, which I call the Zig-Zag Game. This game is played in an odd-looking field that, at first glance, might seem unnecessarily fancy and complicated at first glance. During the course of the explanation below, it will hopefully become clear why it could, nevertheless, have some real usefulness. Of course, coaches can always adopt parts of the idea or even almost none of it, everything is correct and nothing is wrong when it comes to inspiration.

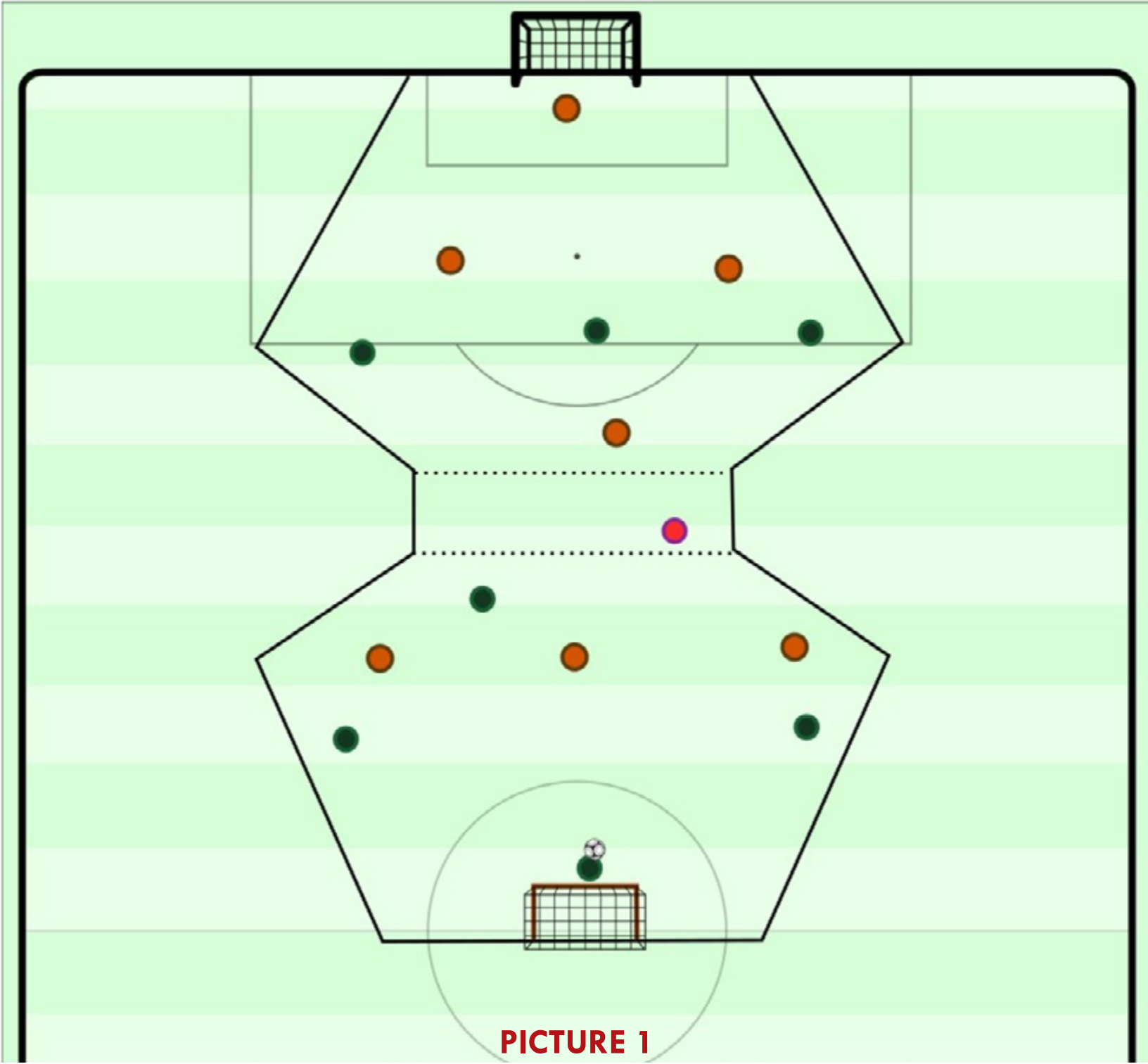
Basic set-up

As a starting point, we have two teams playing against each other with 6 outfield players each. These outfield players are divided into two halves, with 3 more defensive players in the lower defensive/build-up half and 3 more attacking players in the other half. As in a normal game, each team attacks a normal big goal, which is further defended by an opposition goalkeeper. Between the fields, we have a small area, which is where a neutral player starts from. This neutral player is meant to support the team in possession in either half and can float between the areas. As a starting point, players are locked into their half, but this can vary as we may look to layer/vary or evolve the practice. The in-between area where the neutral player starts from is one where players from either side of the total playing area can look to jump and defend into. In other words, initially, this can be seen as a combat zone where

anyone can always go at any time to win the ball. Metaphorically, almost like a neutral zone between two bordering nations.

The game starts with 3 build-up outfield players looking to progress the ball into the other half. They are pressed by the 3 opposition forwards who look to win the ball and immediately counter-attack towards the goal in that half where they would theoretically win the ball. The build-up team can use their goalkeeper, as well as the neutral players, to support them to progress the ball into the other half. In other words, in the build-up up we have a 4v3+ goalkeeper situation, which, if players are spaced well, can be beautifully taken advantage of to get a clean forward progression of the ball into the attacking half. What seems like a relatively straightforward task, of progressing the ball in an effectively 5v3, is made a lot more challenging by the field shape. The field is cut diagonally away from the goal, and thus, there is slightly more space in the middle of the build-up half. However, the field is cut inwards again towards the middle of the field. This brings with it the challenge that players can easily be isolated on one flank of the field, and long-line straight vertical passes are effectively eliminated from the game, as the ball would be out as soon as you attempt this kind of pass.

Therefore, what is effectively forced onto the players is a diagonal ball progression as well as one that goes from the side of the field towards the inside or the other side of the field. A key moment is when the ball enters from the build-up half to the attacking half of the field. In the attacking half, we have 3 attacking players waiting for the ball along with 3 opposition defenders. Once the ball enters the attacking half, an additional player



PICTURE 1

is allowed to join the attacking side and create an in-field overload of a 4v3, while the 3 defenders are obviously further supported by a goalkeeper, so it is really a 4v3+1 situation. This supporting player would oftentimes be the neutral player due to their starting position. However, if the neutral player dropped quite deep to be involved in the build-up in the other half, it could very plausibly also be another build-up player who dynamically joins the attack from a lower position.

A critically important element of this game is how the players in the attacking half prepare the ball progression into that area. The biggest mistake that they can possibly make is to just stand at the edge of the area in a line and all offer close options at the same time. Usually, we play this game with an offside line in either half, on the widest part of the field. Thereby offering some depth that the attacking players can work with in order to create passing options for the build-up players. Effectively, there are 3 clear ways that the ball can enter the higher field. The most successful in terms of ball progression is probably a dribble from the lower to the higher area. However, to create this in the build-up area is really not easy. Now one of the defensive players would have a difficult decision where they would have to jump out onto the dribbling player and probably totally leave alone another of the attacking players. Another way to progress the ball would be a pass over the top to one of the attacking players. Playing over the top of the last opposition defensive line is an extremely underrated way of achieving goalscoring opportunities.

Most opposition defensive lines are finely attuned these days to defending through balls on the ground; defending these in the air is far less simple and can be a great means to achieve clear goalscoring

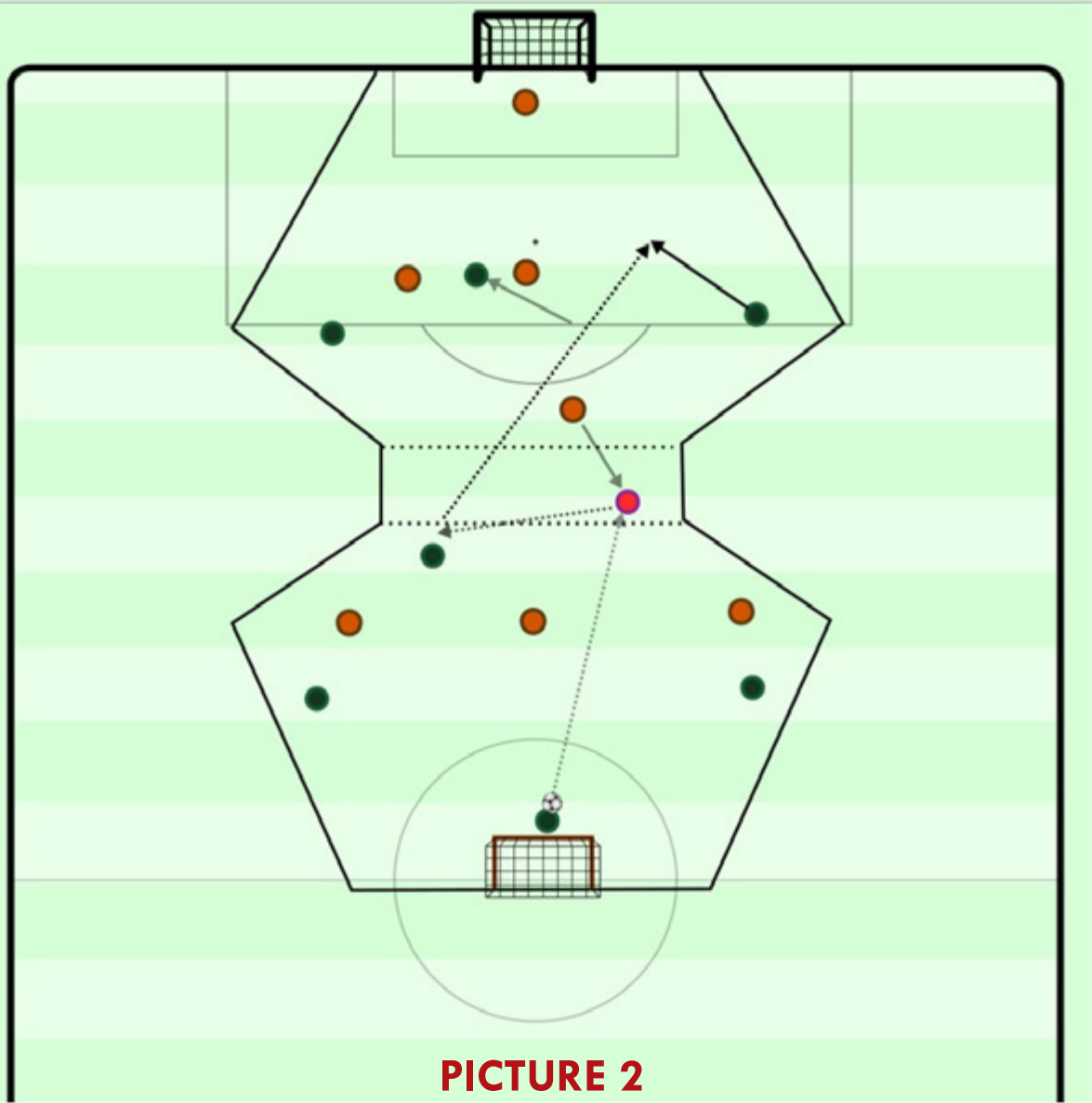
opportunities. The 3rd way would be to play the ball into feet and to probably use an up-back-through combination to play into the attacking half. This is depicted in picture 2. Here, we use the defender's aggression against them. Almost like a Thai-Chi fighter. If the defenders jump to forward-defend, we can get into the space behind their back with layoff combinations, particularly when these layoff combinations involve diagonal backwards passes as depicted in picture 2. From there, the open space that was exposed by the forward defending may very well be accessible, or at worst, the space which is exposed by other defenders who quickly look to cover the forward defending. Alternatively, the same may be achieved by turning against the forward defending player.

Rules and variations

Usually I play this game with the rule that goals that originate from the build-up, in other words, where you progress the ball from the lower to the higher half and scores are worth 2 points. Goals where you win the ball back in pressing and score quickly are worth 1 point. This is, of course, useful if you are like me, quite inclined to want to work on brave possession and ball progression. Another option would be to reward specific actions in the lead-up to goals with extra points. One such example being a clear 4th man or up-back-through progression as depicted in picture 2.

A nice variation to make the game more complex is to add 1 player per side. In other words, to play it as a 5v4 that progresses into another 5v4 on the other side. This makes the game slightly more complex and thereby constitutes another step. Of course, bigger numbers of players equal less actions on average on the ball per player, which is something that needs to be accounted for in the process. Finally,

I've had a great experience with doing this with 3 teams in a tournament format. In this case, the team that concedes the goal immediately leaves the field while the team that scored plays against the 3rd team that comes onto the field. These switches are performed on the fly and can create some really interesting dynamic situations. In this case, if no goals are scored within (for example) 1 minute, the team that was on the field for longer leaves the playing area, with the other one now playing against the 3rd side.



PICTURE 2



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