



FIXTURES

23 SEP 19:30	SIWELELE VS ORLANDO PIRATES	24 SEP 19:30	TS GALAXY VS AMAZULU
24 SEP 15:00	GOLDEN ARROWS VS PHAMOLODI SURFSCORPERS	24 SEP 19:30	RICHARDS BAY VS MAGERI
25 SEP 17:30	KATSEB FISHES VS CHALLENGERS	25 SEP 19:30	SEKONKUNENE UNITED VS CHIPPRA UNITED
26 SEP 19:30	STELLENBOSCH VS DURBAN CITY	26 SEP 19:30	ORBIT COLLEGE VS POLOKWANE CITY

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AMAKHOSI FALLOUT

WHAT REALLY WENT WRONG BETWEEN NABI & CHIEFS



THE DRAWING BOARD WITH MORITZ KOSSMANN & ACE OF THE WEEK

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RUMOURS
LATEST FROM THE RUMOUR MILL



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LATEST FROM IDISKI TV



NABI EXIT
FEATURE



BAFANA'S NEW PARTERSHIP
FEATURE



MANDLA QHOGI
EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW



SIWELELE STORM
NEWS



THANDOLWENKOSI NGWENYA
EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW



AMAJITA
FEATURE



TEAM OF THE WEEK
& ACE OF THE WEEK



TACTICS CORNER
THE DRAWING BOARD

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NIGERIAN DEFENDER BACK AT CITY?

Centre-back Collins Nwoburuoke, who spent part of the pre-season training with Durban City, is understood to be back under Gavin Hunt’s watch as he looks to earn a contract. The 23-year-old Nigerian, formerly of Abia Warriors in his homeland, had earlier been seen training with Orlando Pirates in the hope of joining Abdeslam Ouaddou’s squad. Now, however, he appears to be turning his focus back to City, hoping for a chance to establish himself in the Betway Premiership.



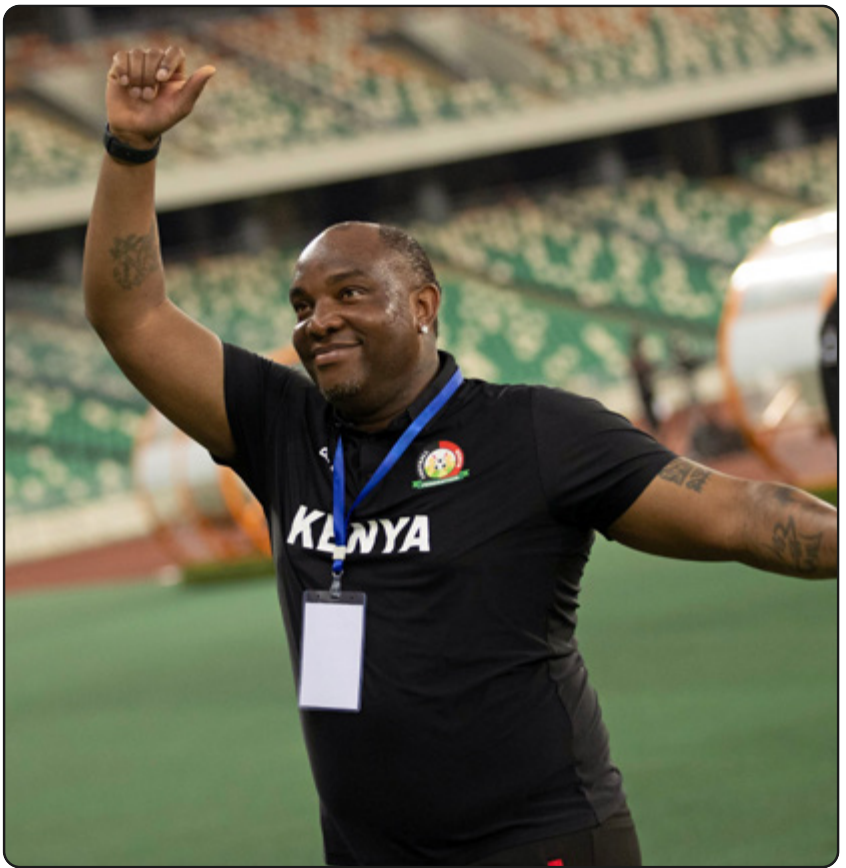
STELLIES FAIL IN DEADLINE DAY MOVE FOR SUNDOWNS WINGER

Stellenbosch FC were unsuccessful as they attempted to secure a last-ditch loan move for Mamelodi Sundowns winger Thapelo Maseko before Monday’s deadline day. In a bid to strengthen their attacking options after a poor start to the new season, Stellies made a season-long loan offer for the out of favour winger. However, with Kutlwano Letlhaku and Siyabonga Mabena heading to Chile for the U20 FIFA World Cup, the deal was rejected by Masandawana.



MCCARTHY OPEN TO PSL RETURN AFTER IMPRESSIVE CHAN?

Kenya national team head coach Benni McCarthy is said to be open to a potential return to coaching in the Premier Soccer League. After leading Kenya to the quarter-finals of the African Nations Championship, The Harambee Stars boss is seemingly opening the door to the elite clubs in South Africa as he’s said to not be comfortable with the off-field issues within the Football Association. He’s made his qualms quite public in the build-up to the CHAN that was hosted by Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda and with recent vacancies at Kaizer Chiefs, and potentially other clubs – his name could be in the hat in the near future.



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SIWELELE STORM BREWING

Siwelele Football Club's troubles deepened this weekend, with storm clouds gathering on and off the pitch and fresh turbulence seemingly on the horizon.

The club, which only recently made headlines by acquiring the SuperSport United franchise, sent shockwaves through the local football scene on Sunday when chairman Calvin Le John confirmed that CEO Stan Matthews and assistant coach Andre Arendse had both departed. Both men had followed the franchise from SuperSport to Siwelele, and their exits fuelled speculation about growing instability behind the scenes.

On the field, matters were just as bleak. Saturday's 2-0 defeat to Magesi stretched Lehlohonolo Seema's winless streak to six games, leaving Siwelele languishing in 14th place and nervously looking over their shoulders at the relegation zone.

While speculation mounted about Seema's future, and still does, the club seems to have decided on alternative solutions.

Le John tried to steady the ship by unveiling former Bafana Bafana defender Willem

Jackson as the new assistant coach, while also announcing the appointment of Lerato Kholoanyane in Matthews' position. In the same breath, however, he revealed that the club was planning a player clear-out and hinted at new signings to come, a sign of more changes at a club still trying to forge an identity after the takeover.

The South African Football Players Union (SAFPU) immediately issued a stern statement, warning Siwelele against "rash decisions" and reminding management of its contractual obligations to players. The union also publicly criticised the club's travel policies after Le John defended a cost-cutting strategy of bussing players to fixtures deemed "within range," a move seen by some as penny-pinching at the expense of player welfare.

If that weren't enough, Siwelele raised eyebrows on Monday by failing to send any representatives to the Carling Knockout draw. With players from the other 15 clubs present, the absence only intensified the sense that Siwelele is a club in disarray, facing a crucial few weeks that could define its season — and perhaps its future.

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KHANYE: I'M NOT SURPRISED BY NABI EXIT

Last week iDiski Times broke the news that Kaizer Chiefs and Nasreddine Nabi were set to part ways, and the coach was not on the bench when Chiefs played Kabuscorp in the CAF Confederation Cup first leg in Angola.

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.

Nasreddine Nabi & Chiefs Part Ways

Junior Khanye:

"I am not surprised by this news.

"When they said his wife was sick and he had to leave, I knew they wanted to get rid of him. To make matters worse, his assistant coaches stayed and won matches for Chiefs without him. There is no smoke without fire.

"In addition, his style of play was not compatible with South African players. Always asking for crosses and aerial balls.

"The Nedbank Cup win saved him. It was a questionable win where his team got favourable calls from the referees; Ashley Du Preez scoring a winning goal from a massive offside against Sundowns, for example."

Tso Vilakazi:

"The news might come as a shock to fans, but those of us in football are not surprised by these developments.

"The only worry for me is that they allowed Nabi to start a new season instead of letting him go last season.

"I also think they did not give him the players he wanted. Perhaps that's what caused the tension.

"All of Chiefs' new players look like they have been signed by the management. Most of them are South African free agents. Maybe Nabi is the one who walked away."

NABI GONE - WHAT NEXT FOR AMAKHOSI?

By Lorenz Köhler

Kaizer Chiefs have all but confirmed the imminent parting of ways with head coach Nasreddine Nabi, who was nowhere to be seen in their CAF Confederation Cup first preliminary round qualifying defeat to Angolan side Kabuscorp S.C.P this weekend – but where did it all go wrong and what’s next on the horizon for Amakhosi beyond the coach who ended their decade-long trophy drought. iDiski Times senior journalist breaks down how

PETERSEN: “I THINK THE IMPORTANT THING FOR US TO REMEMBER IS, IN FOOTBALL COACHES COME AND THEY GO. SOME COACHES, THEY STAY FOR TWO DAYS, SOME THEY STAY FOR 10 YEARS.”



things soured for the Tunisian mentor and what could be on the horizon for the Soweto giants.

Nabi arrived at Chiefs in July 2024, with Amakhosi finally landing their man after talks broke down a year prior when he left Young Africans at the back of winning back-to-back domestic trebles, where he became the first non-Moroccan African coach to lead Botola Pro side ASFAR.

His eventual arrival at Naturena was met with major fanfare, as an established name on the continent, with silverware to back his credentials and two wins from his opening two games set things into overdrive as the off-season signings of captain Inacio Miguel, Bongani Sam, Gaston Sirino, Bradley Cross, Fiacre Ntwari, and Rushwin Dortley looked to have awoken the sleeping giants.

However, that quickly came crashing down as they lost to Sundowns 2-1 in their third league game and were smashed 4-0 in the Carling Knockout Cup by the same opposition, whilst taking nine league games to secure their first clean sheet. To say the league campaign was below par would be an understatement, as they finished outside the top eight for a second consecutive season and were it not for reaching the Nedbank Cup final, which Nabi eventually led Chiefs to their first trophy in a decade – he would have likely been sacked.

Divisions were sown in the technical team, sides were taken within the squad, and the speculation on rifts between his assistants were rife, which could have been paranoia for onlookers, stemming from the first time he was not in charge of the squad due to an operation and the likes of Khalil Ben Youssef and Cedric Kaze – his assistants led Chiefs with aplomb. This got under the skin of the coach and within management, talk of whether Nabi’s exit would benefit the team began.

However, he remained within the role, and was fully backed in the market despite, back in December, sources confirmed that a CAF circular, indicating coaches could no longer sit on the bench with an expired coaching license, caused a few tensions – with the club making it clear that the refresher course was essential as they looked to return to CAF inter-club football in the 2025/26 season. While Nabi agreed to the notion, come June, the documentation was not ready, and again, talks of a rift between the head coach and management resurfaced, where he then insisted it would be resolved before the deadline.

The Tunisian was quite vocal about the shortcomings of the Chiefs squad,



professionalism, mentality and quality – so much that at times Kaze watered down his statements in the media – he often challenged the club’s leadership to bring in better quality in order to improve results, and that’s where the likes of Thabo Cele, Glody Lilepo came in the mid-season window. Before the lavish outlay in this past window period where 11 players were signed and nine left the club.

Once again, renewed optimism, with an unbeaten start of five games in the league, which came to a halt with a 3-1 loss to Sekhukhune United at home – which marked the first time they conceded a goal in the campaign – however, Nabi had been absent from the opening three games as he returned to Tunisia to attend to his wife – who had suffered serious injury at home due to a fall and was hospitalised.

Upon his return, as Chiefs’ CAF adventure drew closer, qualifications for the coach were needed to be provided; that was the beginning of the end – irrespective of whether it’s now been updated – it was said to have been a sign of disrespect and infuriated the club Chairman, sources confirmed. The coach was handed an immediate suspension, and while he stated he would be open to parting ways amicably, talks have remained ongoing about the imminent exit.

One side felt lack of support, from management, within his own technical team and even within sections of the squad – while the other side felt hard done by, for the lack of professionalism and urgency to renew qualifications, for what was required to be seated in the technical area for their opening first preliminary round qualifier against Kabuscorp – which was lost 1-0 in Luanda, Angola, this past weekend without Nabi – who has since returned to his homeland.

Ben Youssef, back when talks were intensifying that Nabi would not be seeing out the campaign last season, was a popular decision within the board and management, and even within the squad to lead the team on an interim

PETERSEN: “I DON’T THINK IT HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE RESULT [VS SEKHUKHUNE].”

basis, and it’s the likely scenario for the upcoming weeks, leading the squad with Kaze as they look to prove they could potentially lead the side on a full-time basis once Nabi’s separation is finalised.

In what may look as a lack of loyalty, from coaches who had stints with him at ASFAR and Young Africans respectively, it becomes the latest dynamic that potentially needs to be navigated, should it be the case and they earn the faith of Amakhosi, who will be the head coach?

Speaking on the matter at the draw for the Carling Knockout on Monday, Chiefs’ goalkeeper Brandon Petersen remained diplomatic and said the team were trying to remain focused on the games they had to play.

“I don’t think it had anything to do with the result,” Petersen said, referring to their loss against Sekhukhune last week.

“I think the important thing for us to remember is, in football coaches come and they go. Some coaches, they stay for two days, some they stay for 10 years. So I think for us as players, the important thing is to remember that we have a job at hand, you know.

“We can’t dwell too much on what’s happening around us and all of that. Yes, it might have an impact on the team, but I think with us, the experience we have in the team, for us, is important to realise that we have games coming thick and fast.

“So for us is to focus ourselves on that, and what we have to do. Regarding that, we have a technical team, we have people leading us that’s been there. So, for me, it’s important for us to stay focused and focus on what we





have to focus on.”

“Obviously, when coaches come, they all come with their own personalities, their own, their own tactics and all of that,” Petersen said on the impact Nabi made.

“And we learn from all of them, you know. When they depart, it’s not always easy, but for us, it’s important, like I said, to focus on what we have to focus on, because if we’re gonna cry every time a coach leaves, we’re gonna be destabilised.

“For us, it’s important, focus, put it where we need to put it, channelling our energy and what we have to do, and that’s our league game coming up on Wednesday, and that’s all we’re focusing on now for the moment.”

As the latest sub-plot in an already tumultuous start to the new campaign unravels, former Angola national team coach Pedro Goncalves has been linked with the job in Portuguese media, but this seems premature at this stage... Benni McCarthy, who is currently with the Kenya national team, is a name that also never seems to fade away when it comes to one of the most sought-after jobs on the African continent, with the Bafana Bafana legend also linked to Mamelodi Sundowns in months gone by.

McCarthy made it clear in a recent interview after their knockout stage exit at the African Nations Championship (CHAN), where his side earned plenty of admirers and plaudits for their displays, that he’d love to return to the hustle and bustle of everyday club management as a young, ambitious, emerging coach. And while his CV has been impressive, winning silverware with Cape Town City, taking AmaZulu to the CAF Champions League group stage – being a first-team coach at Premier League giants Manchester United... Again, this talk of Chiefs may also be premature.

But with the games coming thick and fast with a minimum of eight games between now and the Africa Cup of Nations break, there have been suggestions that an interim coaching staff will see out the year, with the only certainty being that Nabi will no longer coach Chiefs again.

While his priority is the health of his wife – the 60-year-old is believed to have received calls from several of the North African giants, from Etoile du Sahel, Esperance Sportive de Tunis, Al Ahli Tripoli, Raja Athletic Club and Wydad Athletic Club – but it remains to be seen whether he does jump into a new job swiftly – once his exit is made official at the Soweto giants.

Nabi leaves with an indifferent record:

- 35 matches
- 12 wins
- 9 draws
- 14 defeats
- 1 Nedbank Cup title



PETERSEN: “WE HAVE TO FOCUS, BECAUSE IF WE’RE GONNA CRY EVERY TIME A COACH LEAVES, WE’RE GONNA BE DESTABILISED.”

From a new dawn to a messy and somewhat cold separation, which has left fans divided on the situation, what is imperative now is that Chiefs take things to new heights with seven of their latest signings under the age of 26, namely: Ethan Chislett, Thabiso Monyane, Nkanyiso Shinga, Etiosa Ighodaro, Asanele Velebayi, and teenage sensation Luke Baartman.

While experience has improved with the arrivals of Khanyisa Mayo, Siphesihle Ndlovu, Flavio da Silva, Lebohang Maboe and Paseko Mako, it has inflated the squad to over 40 players on the training ground, and only four of the 11 have made their official debuts after seven games in all competitions.

This heavy investment into the playing squad makes the next month crucial for Chiefs’ ambitions this season – the club will need to act decisively or risk wasting what promised to be a turn of the corner for a club that has largely struggled to achieve in the last 10 years since the first stint of Stuart Baxter.

In this period, they have been led by 11 different coaches, but Nabi is the only name that left having lifted a trophy – but that chapter has now drawn to a dramatic halt, which not many expected.



BAFANA UNVEIL NEW SPONSOR ALLIANCE WITH SHIELD & VASELINE

Bafana Bafana have unveiled a striking new alliance with two of South Africa’s most trusted personal care brands, Shield and Vaseline, under the powerful banner of “The Ultimate Defence”. More than a sponsorship deal, this collaboration signals the start of a long-term partnership designed to empower South Africa’s national teams and inspire the nation that rallies behind them.

Both brands, under the Unilever Southern Africa umbrella, bring with them a shared heritage of resilience, preparation and progress, values mirrored in the daily grind of professional football. The partnership embodies the rhythm of the beautiful game: the early-morning drills, the sweat of training, the sting of setbacks and the determination to come back stronger.

Gareth Marshall, Sponsorship Lead at Unilever Southern Africa, feels the collaboration is poised to leave a lasting impact.

“It is really an exciting time to be South African,” Marshall says.

“It’s an exciting time to support football in this country, and just the timing made sense for us to come on board now. The conversations have been ongoing for some time, but now just made sense for us to really take the partnership to the next level.”

This initiative also taps directly into the emotional connection South Africans have with football. Shield and Vaseline, already a partner with Banyana Banyana, and have committed to telling the stories behind the team’s journey, from its grassroots to the highest stage, highlighting the unseen work that builds resilience and the human spirit. Together, they want to nurture a deeper sense of belonging and national pride.



**GARETH MARSHALL:
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“We’ve been on a journey with Banyana over the last few years, in terms of being part of the national team, and then when we looked at the brands and what we wanted to achieve and do,” Marshall explained.

“It was just a natural fit to extend that partnership to include Bafana Bafana.”

The partnership was unveiled on Thursday, 18 September 2025, at the Safehub in Jabulani, Soweto, a symbolic choice that underscored the project’s grassroots focus. The Safehub is renowned for its award-winning sport-for-development model, using football to link young people to education, health care and career pathways. Against this backdrop of youthful energy and opportunity, the launch captured the heartbeat of football in South Africa.

Guests experienced an immersive journey that mirrored the intensity of a match day: preparation in the changing rooms, the adrenaline of pre-match rituals, the recovery sessions afterwards, the hard work and dedication hidden behind every ninety-minute display. By creating this visceral atmosphere, Shield and Vaseline placed the emphasis squarely on what happens before the whistle blows, reinforcing the campaign’s message that elite performance is built long before match day.

Through #TheUltimateDefence, both brands are rallying the public to form a united front behind Bafana Bafana, extending their support beyond the stands. Shield symbolises confidence, agility and freedom of movement,

**LYDIA MONYEPAO:
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while Vaseline reflects care, healing and protection. Together, they echo the dual qualities at the heart of both football and everyday South African life: the drive to push forward and the ability to recover and rise again.

The South African Football Association (SAFA), led by CEO Lydia Monyepao, has welcomed the partnership as a milestone in the ongoing effort to elevate football nationally and across the continent.

“We’re really excited to be partnering Shield again, where Bafana Bafana is concerned, because they were already on board with Banyana Banyana, but now also adding Vaseline on top of that to ensure we have even more support for our senior national teams,” she stated.

“I think we all know as an association... the struggles we are faced with, we don’t have sufficient resources to be catering for all the different areas or elements where football development is concerned.

“So whenever someone great or as



powerful as Unilever comes on board, it means we have more resources to channel to our national teams so that when they go to international competitions they don't just add numbers - they compete, they're competitive and fight for trophies. That's ultimately our goal as far as the South African Football Association (SAFA) is concerned."

To further energise supporters, Shield and Vaseline have launched a competition that will give fans the chance to cheer Bafana Bafana live at the 2025 AFCON in Morocco this December. Entry details are already available through Unilever South Africa channels, transforming the partnership from a corporate pledge into an invitation for the whole nation to join the journey.

"So we started when you look at just the everyday matches, we've taken the freshness zone to the last Bafana game, really giving fans that elevated experience," Marshall continued.

"And then also something later this year, we've got a competition going now where we're taking 20 fans to Morocco to go and watch the national team go and compete on the world stage."

In uniting two iconic brands with South Africa's most cherished football teams, 'The Ultimate Defence' isn't just a campaign slogan, it's a rallying call for resilience, pride and collective belief.

"So obviously, we've been with Banyana a while; it started in 2023 and now we've just extended it, and there's always going to be ongoing talks for us," Marshall concluded.

"It's really about how do you play

**GARETH MARSHALL:
"WE'VE GOT A COMPETITION GOING NOW WHERE WE'RE TAKING 20 FANS TO MOROCCO TO GO AND WATCH THE NATIONAL TEAM GO AND COMPETE ON THE WORLD STAGE."**

in all levels of football, and be here to make a difference. It's very much about being mutually beneficial.

"Yes, we need to get something out of it as a brand, but also, how do we give back to the fans, and wherever that journey takes us, that's what we will unlock."

The South Africa men's national team are headed to a consecutive Africa Cup of Nations after securing a bronze medal in Côte d'Ivoire with renewed expectations when they land in Morocco in December and are also potentially two games away from securing their place at the 2026 FIFA World Cup to be hosted by the United States of America, Canada and Mexico in June next year.



QHOGI: RELE WAS A STAR FROM DAY ONE

Former Orlando Pirates reserve side head coach MANDLA QHOGI, who is currently the head coach of Nsingizini Hotspurs in Swaziland, recently spent some time speaking with iDiski Times journalist SINETHEMBA MAKONCO. Qhogi had been coaching at the junior level before he led Pirates DStv Diski Challenge side, where he groomed the likes of Mohau Nkota and Relebohile Mofokeng. After several years at Pirates, he went on to coach Sekhukhune United's reserve side, where he only lasted a year before joining Motsepe Foundation Championship side Milford FC. His coaching job at Nsingizini Hotspurs comes as no surprise, as he has shown more than glimpses of being a good coach, and the South African-born mentor has already won a trophy with Hotspurs in Swaziland, which is his first professional trophy.

Sinethemba Makonco: How much does it mean to win your first professional trophy?

Mandla Qhogi: I am very much excited with the achievements; this is one of many still to come. I have invested a lot in my coaching ability, and it is paying off now with the opportunity given to me. It could have come early with my previous club, but interference delayed it.

SM: How would you rate the level of football in Swaziland?

MQ: The football in Eswatini is growing

with more clubs taking football more serious and starting to invest in the game. The forces are professional teams with a core business being football. You got your Mbabane Swallows and Highlands AM, having people who are coming to inject cash to sustain football business in the clubs. The level of football is growing and taking the right direction to improve football development structures.

SM: What are your ambitions as a coach and the mandate you've been given by the club?

MQ: My ambition as a coach is keeping myself in the CAF Champions League level to expose my craft in coaching while also continuing to win trophies. The mandate is to get into the next round of Champions League and even make it to the group stage. Retain the league trophy and help the club in restructuring its club programs.

SM: Do you think SA teams undermine their own coaches after being given an opportunity outside South Africa?

MQ: Not at all, we have too many capable coaches in South Africa and with clubs being less. So it's not all of us that can get opportunities to be given a chance. Maybe when the time is right, a South African team will be able to utilise our coaching abilities.

SM: Nsingizini Hotspurs will be



playing CAFCL. How excited are you to be part of the biggest African club competition?

MQ: It’s a great one. I used to see CAFCL far from being a coach in a team competing there. I gave a lot of support to my former colleagues Rulani Mokoena, Fadlu Davids, and coach Pitso Mosimane, who all have done well in representing South Africa in this competition. It’s my chance now to also push to do well with my team.

SM: How far do you think Nsingizini Hotspurs can go in the CAFCL?

MQ: The team has the ability to reach the group stage. This is up to us to put more effort and continue to work hard.

SM: You groomed both Mohau Nkota and Rele Mofokeng. When you first saw them in the Pirates development, did you think they would make it this far?

MQ: Maybe Nkota, yes, I scouted [him] and helped groom with other colleagues. Rele, yes, scouted, but I did not have much time with him, three, four months before Joseph Makhanya took over from me. We could see Nkota that he will make it far; he possesses a lot of good attributes that a player in his position must have. For Rele, I remember how we fought to get him after they let him go train with Sundowns. Our reaction was a bit slow in pushing to sign. Rele was a star from day one. I just told my colleagues that this boy will one day play in Europe. Yes, definitely, we could see them reach the highest level of the game.

SM: How important is it for a coach to

“RELE WAS A STAR FROM DAY ONE. I JUST TOLD MY COLLEAGUES THAT THIS BOY WILL ONE DAY PLAY IN EUROPE.”

start at the grassroots?

MQ: Eish... ja me coming from youth structures, I would say it’s important as you learn to deal with players from different levels, ages, behaviour, and you need to be able to nurture these players’ talent in the direction of good human beings and complete athletes. This has given me a platform to be able to work with different characters, understanding players at all levels. I gain knowledge to be able to coach players at all levels, youth and senior football. I would want to give credit to Orlando Pirates FC, Augusto Palacios, Johannes ‘Yster’ Khomane, the Late Sphiwe [Ngwenya] Skhosana, Sifiso [Junior] Bhengu, Simon Magera and all other colleagues who supported me in being part of my growth in being a development coach for the past 21 years.

SM: Thank you very much, coach, for your time. Wishing you all the best.

MQ: Thank you to you, too, Makonco.



‘WHY SHALULILE IS MY ROLE MODEL’

Not a lot of players get to watch their careers start and progress swiftly like AmaZulu FC and Zimbabwe attacking midfielder THANDOLWENKOSI NGWENYA. At 22 years old, Usuthu is only the second professional side Ngwenya has played for after FC Platinum in his home country. A career that moves swiftly also doesn't mean it was without its challenges, as Ngwenya tells iDiski Times writer LETHABO KGANYAGO in this edition. Ngwenya, who already has two league goals for AmaZulu in the Betway Premiership so far, tells this publication about an injury he thought would take him out of the game, recovering from it and being selected for his national team that did duty at the COSAFA Cup this year, being scouted and finding himself in South Africa. The soft-spoken youngster also shares his joy of playing in the same league as his role model, Peter Shalulile, and being part of the Warriors squad for the 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifiers, among other matters.

Lethabo Kganyago: Thando, thank you for speaking to iDiski Times. What do you make of the season so far?

Thandolwenkosi Ngwenya: It's a nice start, though we were supposed to win the past two games. We will correct our mistakes. It's a nice start, and we are also in the top 8 so far.

LK: You have scored two goals so far. Is it also how you personally wanted to start?

TN: I have missed chances and I should have more [goals], but I take the positives and move on.

LK: And how has it been adjusting in a new country and a new league?

TN: It's been tough, but I'm adjusting. You know the football this side is a bit faster compared to Zimbabwe, but I'm adjusting well and not missing home yet. When I came here, I told myself I'm here to work.

LK: What does your support system look like here in South Africa?

TN: I have a support system, guys like [Divine] Lunga, [Elvis] Chipezeze, Knox Mutizwa. They always call me and check on me.

LK: We know that you were scouted at the COSAFA Cup. How did AmaZulu approach you, and were they the only team in South Africa that wanted your services?

TN: AmaZulu came after Chippa [United], then I chose AmaZulu. I spoke to my former coach, Norman Mapeza, who was once at Chippa, and he advised me to go with AmaZulu because they have better facilities. He's like a father to me; he played me when I was younger, he believes in me and motivates me every time.

LK: This is only your second club in the professional ranks. Did you think things would move this fast for you?

TN: Things have progressed nicely for me in 2021/22 when I got promoted from the development at Platinum, but in 2024, I suffered an injury, and I started doubting myself. When the season started, I thought it would be my last season at Platinum. I thought maybe they'd chase me away, but things changed. I started scoring in each and every game. I played 16 games and scored nine goals. That's when I got called up for the COSAFA





Cup, and when AmaZulu approached me, I was shocked because I thought that was my last year at Platinum because I thought they'd chase me.

LK: I'm sure you are pleased things turned out differently.

TN: Now I think the setback of that injury was like God wanted to test my mentality. That's how I came back this year.

LK: Having scored nine goals for Platinum, plus the two you have scored here so far, can we expect more than nine goals from you?

TN: You must also remember the nine goals I scored them this season, because the league is still going on in Zimbabwe. As far as scoring this side, I will leave everything to God because I do have my targets and I won't reveal them. I will leave the rest to God. He is the one that brought me here. He is the one who has carried me.

LK: How big was that COSAFA Cup with everything that happened leading up to it?

TN: For the tournament, they chose U23 players, and I just knew I'm there because I was one of the best U23 players in Zimbabwe. I just knew I'm there, but when I scored at COSAFA, that's when I started noticing that I can do better. It was my second time in the national team, the first time was last year, September, in the CHAN qualifiers.

LK: I was reading somewhere that you are the first Zimbabwean player to move to South Africa post the COVID era. And we know the quality of Zimbabwean players, especially attackers, do you feel pressure to perform at a high level?

"I WANTED TO BE LIKE KHAMA [BILLIAT], BUT I REALISED ME AND KHAMA ARE DIFFERENT. KHAMA IS TALENTED, AND I NEED TO WORK HARD."

TN: There is always pressure, especially as a foreigner, and I believe I will score. I will take the pressure off by doing my job because you can't perform well when you are under pressure.

LK: What has Coach Arthur Zwane said he needs from you?

TN: Coach Arthur always tells me that I'm here to score, and every time I'm doubtful, he becomes that voice that says I can do it. Even when I missed those chances vs Sekhukhune [United] I thought he was going to hammer me. But he just came and said, 'Are you promising me a goal against Magesi?' And I promised I was going to score, and I did. He was happy for me. He is a coach who trusts in me.

LK: Did you expect to start playing immediately when you came to AmaZulu?

TN: I have a belief that I will play at every team I go to. That's the mentality I have.

LK: Who are some of the attackers you have looked up to growing up?

TN: I wanted to be like Khama [Billiat], but I realised me and Khama are different. Khama is talented, and I need to work hard. And I looked at [Peter] Shalulile. Shalulile works hard;



he's not the most talented, so I modelled myself around him. I said I want to be like Shalulile, and he is my role model.

LK: I'm sure it feels good to be playing in the same league as him.

TN: Yes, and even when I was still in Zimbabwe, I'd tag him on Instagram and he never replied. So when we played against Mamelodi Sundowns, when the game finished, I went to him and told him, 'My brother, you are my role model.'

LK: What did he say?

TN: You know, Shalulile, he just said, 'Pray, my brother, everything is going to be fine'.

LK: Are you also motivated seeing him break records as someone fairly at the start of his career?

TN: Breaking records is something difficult, and I'm just still trying to score and convert my chances. Even my coach thinks I'm one of the best strikers, so he always motivates me and tells me I have everything, I should relax and play my football.

LK: You were called up for the World Cup qualifiers. How did you feel about this call-up with the seniors, the stars?

TN: It feels good. When we played at COSAFA as U23s, someone asked me a question if I want to be in the senior team, and I said I want to be in the senior national team, and it came so fast. Now I'm with the senior national team.

LK: Where were you when you got the news, and how did you react?

TN: It was when I scored that brace in KZN that I thought they might call me. Then I saw the list when we were in Polokwane after the Sekhukhune game. They posted on the Zimbabwe social media platforms that Thando Ngwenya is in the squad. I thought maybe they were making jokes. When I realised it was real, I was happy.

LK: Technically, Zimbabwe cannot qualify for the World Cup, though you must still honour fixtures. For you, being the team, what does it then become about?

TN: For me, if I'm given a chance, it's about doing my job. I'm happy to rub shoulders with greats like [Knowledge] Musona, [Marvellous] Nakamba, that makes me happy.

LK: I know you said your role model is Peter, but did you also look up to Knowledge Musona?

TN: I played with his brother Walter, and we won the league together. That season, he scored 14, and I scored 10, but his older brother, I never played with him. And I never saw him live, so I was happy that I actually got to see him in camp. Something amazing, and with Khama, I thought I was going to play with him in the national team, but



“COACH ARTHUR ALWAYS TELLS ME THAT I'M HERE TO SCORE, AND EVERY TIME I'M DOUBTFUL, HE BECOMES THAT VOICE THAT SAYS I CAN DO IT.”

he was injured. I don't know if I'll get called up again in the future, where I can play with him.

LK: Was the camp also a moment to absorb as much as you can from the legends as a youngster and possibly the future of Zimbabwean football?

TN: Definitely learning something from them, but I can't say I'm the future of Zimbabwean football because we don't know what will happen tomorrow. We just have to wait to see when they retire who will replace them. I can't say I'm the future of Zimbabwe because also there are other strikers in Zimbabwe who are younger than me.

LK: Do you think that with the quality in the Warriors team, the team could have done better in these qualifiers?

TN: Ah, there I don't know. I'm just happy that Zimbabwe qualified for the AFCON (2025/26).

LK: Are you looking to do well enough to be part of the AFCON squad?

TN: Like I said, I have my target, like how many goals I need to score, and I know that if I reach those goals, they are going to call me. But I'm still not going to tell you that target because if I tell you and I can't reach that target eish...

LK: (Laughs) I hear you. Thank you for speaking to us, Thando and all the best.



CAN AMAJITA'S GOLDEN GENERATION MAKE HISTORY IN CHILE?

South Africa's football future touches down in Chile this week as Raymond Mdaka's Amajita, the U20 African champions, kick off their quest to conquer the globe at the FIFA U20 World Cup. Never before has a South African men's side gone to a World Cup carrying the crown of continental kings, until now.

Mdaka has named a squad bursting with belief, keeping the full cast of heroes who outplayed Morocco in the AFCON U20 final earlier this year. Yet there's fresh sparkle too: Siyabonga Mabena, Luke Baartman and Siviwe Magidigidi who missed out on AFCON but have been part of previous squads, have been drafted in, adding flair, pace and new tactical options. It's an exciting blend heading to Chile, with a nation's hopes and a slice of history on their shoulders.

Shakeel April has been one of those part of every squad, and the 19-year-old is excited to reunite with the squad, and is also happy to have those abovementioned players back.

"I'm very excited, and I think the guys are excited as well," the Cape Town City winger told iDiski Times.

"We're going to have to make a name for ourselves and do the thing, the business.

"I can't wait to see the guys, because sharing one goal – it feels different.

"I'm happy to have Mabena, Magidigidi, and Baartman back in the mix.

"They are good players, and they can add more value to the team, and surely they will give us something."

Meanwhile, Mdaka said that it was an incredibly difficult decision to select just 21 names, but he is confident with the squad selected.

"I'm confident because we're talking about players we have had throughout, if you look back to the Cosafa Cup, the team as a whole, it's more of the players we have been with and it gives you confidence because you know how much they can do, how much they can fight and how much they can give," Mdaka said.

"So it's one area that gives us confidence, to say it's a team that can compete, or that can play and represent the country. Honestly, this was the first time I could stay with the list where I stayed for more than two weeks without releasing. You make up your mind, you go to practice, you change, the following day you have a session and change again.

"It was very difficult, very complex, mostly because of the kind of quality that is there, but honestly, as a technical team, we needed to get the right balance in terms of the positions. Having to go with 21 and three goalkeepers it's a minus in terms of the infield players.

"So what we had to do is make sure that some, and most players you take are those that can cover you in different areas. It wasn't an easy task but we came up with the 21 we listed."

Mbekezeli Mbokazi (Orlando Pirates) and Shandre Campbell (Club Brugge) stand out as the two headline absentees from the Amajita squad travelling to Chile. Both have already 'outgrown' their age-group reputations, and their omissions underline just how quickly their careers have accelerated. Mbokazi's meteoric rise from youth prospect to Bafana Bafana starter, and now even captaining Orlando Pirates, has been



nothing short of extraordinary. At only 20, he’s arguably become ‘too senior’ for the U20s. His experience and leadership would undoubtedly lift the entire squad, yet it’s a classic catch-22: he’s now indispensable for the senior team’s crucial World Cup qualifiers in October, especially with Siyabonga Ngezana suspended for the Zimbabwe clash. In an ideal world, there’d be no fixture clashes and Mdaka could call on his services, but the timing simply doesn’t allow it.

Campbell’s case is the classic club-versus-country dilemma. The talented forward has broken into Club Brugge’s first team, and with this World Cup not taking place entirely during an official FIFA window, the Belgian club is under no obligation to release him as they embark on their UEFA Champions League campaign. It’s a continuation of the frustration from earlier in the year when he also missed the U20 AFCON. Like Mbokazi, Campbell’s inclusion would have transformed the squad’s options. Still, their absence should also be seen as a positive reflection of South African football’s development pipeline: two young players who have already reached senior elite levels, even as their age-group peers embark on a World Cup adventure of their own.

“I wouldn’t want to comment much,” Mdaka said on the Mbokazi matter.

“On the basis that it’s an internal matter, but to be honest, [Hugo Broos] wants to use him for Bafana to qualify [for the World Cup], because it’s coming on the 9th and we’ll be in Chile.

“So it’s something I won’t comment more about, but the thing is, there was an agreement, or rather a request, let me say – let’s allow him to play for Bafana Bafana.”

While April knows Mbokazi and Campbell will be missed, he also says that the pair’s success at club level is inspiring to the rest of the group.

“Ja, they are out, but I think it’s part of football,” April explained.

“And they are doing better things at the club level. And I just wish them the best for the season.

“Their success motivates us to get to where they are in their careers.”

Gabriel Amato (Cape Town City) is another name many had pencilled in after his steady rise in the Mother City, but, just as at the AFCON, he’s absent once again. Amato has cemented himself as a first-team regular at City and has attended several U20 camps, so his omission is intriguing. It’s still unclear whether his absence is a club-versus-country issue, or whether it was a calculated selection decision from Mdaka. Faiz Abrahams (Hapoel Kfar Saba) was part of the AFCON-winning squad earlier in the year, but at the time, he was based in South Africa. His loan move to Israel may have complicated his call-up. Yet Mdaka’s task was never going to be easy: the return of Siyabonga Mabena from injury opened up new options in

midfield and attack, inevitably forcing tough choices about who to include and who to leave out. Some had also hoped to see Emile Witbooi (Cape Town City) included, but while he was part of the COSAFA-winning U20 squad, it looks like he has been left to lead the Amajimbos attack at the FIFA U17 World Cup in Qatar. Their absence, and many others, including AFCON winners Gopolang Taunyane (Kaizer Chiefs) and Kgomotso Modiba (Stars of Africa), underscores how competitive the selection pool has become.

SOUTH AFRICA’S GROUP E FIXTURES:

29 September 2025: Amajita versus France.

3 October 2025: Amajita v New Caledonia.

5 October 2025: Amajita v USA.

“We are all very happy to play in the World Cup, for instance, for the players, it’s an achievement of its kind,” the coach said about the challenge ahead.

“But at the same time, every time when you get into the field of play, the challenge is you have to compete. And in this instance, you’re not just competing with the ordinary, you’re competing with the best of the best in the world, after all.

“So it’s a positive challenge. It’s a good show for the players to show themselves, but with what we have, I honestly believe we can be able to compete, or we can be able to showcase for the country what is it that we have as a country.”

“It’s a must for us to do our homework as we



did in the other tournaments,” Mdaka added about their opponents.

“It gives you another advantage when you study them. But what we normally do, you put more on yourself before you can put more on your opponents. But obviously we’re trying to check everything that we can get. Sometimes it’s very difficult to get some of the information, like with New Caledonia. But with the kind of analysts we have, I think we’re able to get something to assist us, adding to how we’re preparing.”

The Squad:

Goalkeepers:

Fletcher Smythe-Lowe (Estoril Praia), the goalkeeper of the tournament at the U20 AFCON, was one of the standout heroes of Amajita’s title-winning run and a driving force behind their remarkable success. Despite not yet making his professional debut, the Cape Town-born shot-stopper has already become something of a cult figure among South African fans, with growing calls for him to be fast-tracked into the senior Bafana Bafana set-up. Having been based in Portugal since 2020, Smythe-Lowe has honed his game in European conditions and matured well beyond his years. He will once again be pivotal if Amajita are to shine on the global stage in South America.

Takalani Mazhamba (Kaizer Chiefs) and Kgoleng Ratisani (Sekhukhune United) also return to complete the goalkeeping department. Both are capable young goalkeepers who should be ready if, for any reason, Smythe-Lowe is unavailable.

Defenders:

Tylon Smith (Queens Park Rangers), the reigning AFCON Player of the Tournament, heads to Chile brimming with confidence and expectation. The former Stellenbosch defender has enjoyed a whirlwind rise: from lifting the continental title in Egypt to sealing a move to England, where he has already made his senior debut. Now, the focus turns to whether he can reprise that commanding form on the global stage.

Asekho Tiwani (Mamelodi Sundowns) also returns, and his comeback is one of the most talked-about stories of this squad. Injured in the opening game of the AFCON, he watched from the sidelines as Amajita fought their way to glory. His absence was felt, but his return brings balance, steel and experience to Mdaka’s team at a crucial time.

In Tiwani’s absence, Neo Rapoo (Siwelele) emerged as an unsung hero. Switching roles between defence and attack, the versatile left-back-cum-winger showcased his adaptability and leadership. In Chile, Rapoo will once again be a key cog, and the tournament offers him the perfect stage to advertise his fast-rising talent.

Siviwe Nkwali (Stellenbosch) was another player who flourished under pressure, moving from right-back to central defence to partner Smith and doing so with remarkable composure. Having recently rebooted his club career with a switch from Cape Town Spurs to Stellenbosch, Nkwali now looks poised to be an important figure in his natural position for Amajita as well.

Sfiso Timba (Kaizer Chiefs) is another promising name in the mix. Having shone for Chiefs in their DStv Diski Challenge-winning side, he lacks the first-team exposure of some teammates but makes up for it with years of experience in the national youth system. His steady AFCON performances proved he can be trusted on the big stage.

Keep an eye on Thato Sibiya (Mamelodi Sundowns). Still waiting for his senior breakthrough at club level, the fleet-footed youngster showed flashes of brilliance in Egypt. With Sundowns stacked with stars, breaking into the first team will be no easy feat, but a standout display in Chile could fast-track his path.

Central Midfielders:

Lazola Maku (Siwelele), returns to the squad and is once again tipped to anchor the midfield. Tireless and tactically astute, the diminutive Maku was arguably the unsung hero of Egypt, knitting together defence and attack with understated precision. He will again be partnered by Gomolemo Kekana (Mamelodi Sundowns), the midfield dynamo who etched his name into the history books by scoring the title-clinching goal in the AFCON final. Together they form a balanced pairing of industry and invention, and this World Cup could be the stage on which their partnership blossoms into something truly formidable. Although neither has yet become a household name in senior football, both



Maku and Kekana have been standouts in the DStv Diski Challenge and are widely regarded as future stars.

Meanwhile, Patrick Autata (Durban City), technically the squad’s captain, provides experience and leadership even when not starting. A regular off the bench during the AFCON, Autata may again find himself in a rotation role, not because of any shortcomings, but because of the remarkable talent depth in front of him. Fresh off joining Gavin Hunt’s Durban City side, Autata’s ability to slot in seamlessly when called upon gives Amajita an extra layer of resilience.

Attacking Midfielders:

Although Shakeel April (Cape Town City) has yet to make the breakthrough he would have wanted at senior level, the quick-footed winger has been nothing short of electric for Amajita. A constant menace down the flank, April’s ability to both score and create goals has turned him into one of the squad’s most reliable attacking weapons, and he arrives in Chile eager to convert youth-level dominance into global headlines.

On the other wing, Kutlwano Letlhaku (Mamelodi Sundowns) continues to look every inch a future star. Already a pivotal figure for the U20s, his composure and versatility have marked him out as a player of rare maturity. With scouts from Europe reportedly circling, the Chilean World Cup could be the shop window that accelerates his path from academy product to first-team regular at Sundowns, if they can hold onto him.

Langelihle Phili (Stellenbosch) also heads into the tournament in encouraging form. Having found the net several times in the Betway Premiership already this season, the industrious midfielder combines a high work rate with a goal threat from deep, and Chile could be the stage for him to push himself into Europe’s view.

Then there’s Mfundo Vilakazi (Kaizer Chiefs), the creative spark who can unlock defences with one audacious flick or darting run. Long hailed as one of South Africa’s brightest prospects, Vilakazi has at times struggled to convert hype into consistent performances, but a tournament like this offers exactly the kind of stage on which he could explode into the consciousness of the wider football world.

Finally, the return of Siyabonga Mabena (Mamelodi Sundowns) provides Mdaka with another invaluable weapon. After missing much of 2025 through injury, the explosive attacker marked his comeback with a goal for Sundowns last month, a timely reminder of his quality. Fit again and eager to impress, Mabena gives Amajita’s attack an extra edge as they prepare to take on the world in South America.

Forwards:

Jody Ah Shene (Cape Town City) returns to spearhead the Amajita frontline, a familiar face in an evolving side. Though the 19-year-old striker has yet to fully stamp his authority at club level, he has

been a revelation for the national U20s over the past year, and this is likely why Sundowns were trying to swoop in to secure the striker from City. Something about the green and gold seems to ignite his instincts, his movement sharper, his finishing more clinical, and coach Mdaka will be counting on that spark again in Chile.

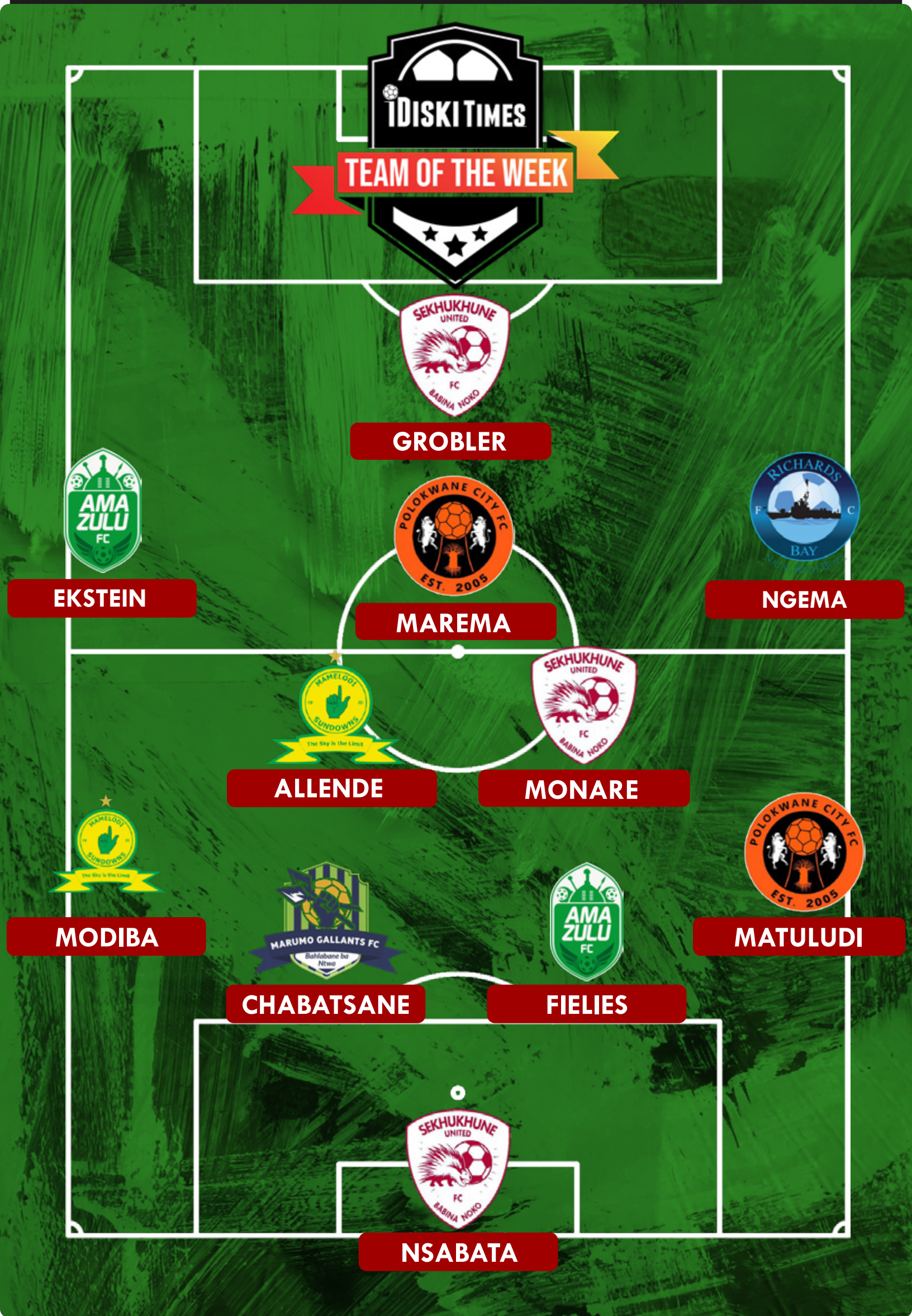
Sharing the burden up front is Thabang Mahlangu (Siwelele), another proven finisher whose knack for big moments is already etched into Amajita folklore. Three goals at the AFCON, including that unforgettable extra-time winner against DR Congo in the quarter-finals, have cemented his reputation as a clutch player who thrives when the stakes are highest.

Also back in the fold is Siviwe Magidigidi (Siwelele). Absent during the triumphant AFCON campaign, the former Ubuntu academy star has begun the new domestic season with eye-catching form. His inclusion adds another dimension to the attack. Pace, flair and a touch of unpredictability, exactly the qualities that can unsettle defences at a World Cup.

Then there’s Luke Baartman (Kaizer Chiefs), one of the more intriguing stories. An absentee in Egypt, he had been injured in the build-up, but he made his return for Cape Town Spurs just before the finals, but still missed out. There remains controversy about his move to Chiefs, and he hasn’t played since joining, so it’s been months without competitive football. Yet despite the off-field drama and the frustration of being sidelined, he remains one of South Africa’s brightest attacking prospects, and this tournament offers him a chance to reclaim lost momentum.



IDISKI TEAM OF THE WEEK (16-21 SEPTEMBER)



ACE OF THE WEEK:
BRADLEY GROBLER

Our iDiski Times Ace of the Week is Sekhukhune United striker Bradley Grobler after a fantastic week for his club. The veteran striker, who joined Eric Tinkler’s team at the start of the campaign, scored a brace in the 3-1 win over Kaizer Chiefs mid-week, and followed that up with a stoppage-time winner against Golden Arrows on Saturday to keep Babina Noko top of the Betway Premiership. The 37-year-old is currently the joint top scorer in the league alongside Iqraam Rayners, with five goals, and Grobler’s strike in the 1-0 victory over Arrows took his overall tally to 124, just six behind new record-holder Peter Shalulile, and five behind Siyabonga Nomvethe’s 129.



THE DRAWING BOARD

The Drawing Board with Moritz Kossmann

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

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

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

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

Expert Interview Yiannis Tsalatsidis Part 1

This week we have the great pleasure of speaking to coach Yiannis Tsalatsidis. Yiannis is a coach from Canada who has extensive experience of working at all levels of the game, men's and women's football, boys and girls, senior and development. Yiannis most recently worked with NK Domzale in Slovenia and before that with FC London in Ontario in his native Canada. We will benefit from his extensive knowledge by asking questions around various coaching topics.

Yiannis, thank you for your time. Excited to have you share on this platform! To start with, could you please share a little bit about your coaching journey and how you got to the point where you are currently at?

YT: When coaching in Canada, you have to become a master at turning your biggest constraints into superpowers. Back home, there is no clear pathway for coaches, no blueprint or role model you can look up to and say, 'These are the clues for success.' So I made my own. Nearly a decade ago, I did a thought experiment asking 3 simple questions. What will football look like in 25 years from now? What skill sets will the future coach and director need? And most importantly, what type of environment do I want to create for my people? These questions took me down a curiosity trail where I devoured research papers, analysed thousands of football matches, and even spent 21 days in an ashram to enhance my own self and situational awareness. Funny enough, this is the first time I've ever shared that with anyone. Career-wise wise I have worked across all ages and levels from under 5's to national teams, boys, girls, male, female, semi-professional (where we were the first team in Canadian history to win promotion in semi-pro football) and professional football in the Canadian Premier League. I've also worked within various roles, from head coach, individual game insight coaching within teams (working with individual players in the MLS and Europe), from being an assistant coach and Head of Methodology (in Slovenian Prva Liga). Stacking theory and a diversity of practical experiences, I developed a unique skillset in sense-making, methodology, and game insight coaching. To ensure I was earning enough in my early coaching days, I was working various roles at the same time, grinding out 15-hour days... I was the lead of U5-8 programming in my home, where I developed training plans and mentored coaches while simultaneously head coaching U11's and a local men's college team (who were all older than me). Those were incredible times cross-pollinating learnings, it's something I couldn't recommend enough for coach (and personal) development in the early parts of one's career, it's those experiences that shape you, they force you to adapt quickly to such different contexts. In Canada, you don't have access to the latest knowledge, so you have to tenaciously go seeking, asking better questions and exchanging curiosities with people who are on the same search. So that's precisely the



journey, it's one that has no end. The journey is all about constantly answering one simple question... "What new truths are you currently seeking?" and for me, I am going around Europe asking how clubs are really investing in their people. It's a mini coaching sabbatical if you will, visiting clubs (first team and academies) with exactly that in mind. I chose four clubs specifically, each for different reasons; Hajduk Split is a proper talent hotbed, Bayern Munich, a global superpower, SV Ried a tiny powerhouse in Austria punching above its weight, and FC Nordsjælland, a purpose-driven club at the core of the famous right to dream project. I want to know who is truly doing this on a world-class level and how exactly this looks in reality. Both in terms of players, coaches, and personnel. Why? Because motivation stems from deprivation, and it's something I always craved but never had. So I want to learn who is doing this best, so I will be ready to serve better when I find my next project.

A question that follows this up is about the football that you prefer? How would you, in general terms like to set up your teams and what are some of the teaching principles that you employ to achieve that?

YT: I love football that keeps fans on the edge of their seats. A team should strive to create as many "wow" moments as possible in a match. We all, in some way, live vicariously through the players, so I admire teams that evoke strong emotions through intensity balanced with intentionality. I've always aimed to set up my teams with an adaptive buildup base—not one rooted in rigid structure or reacting to whether the opponent presses with a 1-2-3 formation, but instead focused on reading the opponent's dynamic: are they actively pressing or passively defending? The buildup should morph around this reading, selecting the right behaviours to employ. This approach helps us progress the ball with intent and sets up clearer cues for our "speed-up" moments. I define the "SpeedUp" as the anticipation of creating a forward-facing player in front of or behind the opponent's last line. This is our collective mental switch to accelerate the attack. It's also a critical moment where players choose actions to arrive in the box or set up our ready defence.

Within an attack, I see three clear rhythms:

1. Centrality
2. Visiting Width
3. Opposites

Centrality is about keeping the ball central for as long as possible during the attack, playing between and through with dynamism.

If this isn't possible, we enter the next rhythm: Visiting Width. This involves circulating the ball wide to come back inside, as if to switch play, only to move the ball wide again. This tactic fixates on the opponent's attention and creates opportunities to exploit blind spots. Key behaviours in this rhythm include using back angles, blindside movements, skip passes, and dynamic combinations.

The final rhythm, Opposites, involves exploiting opposite half-spaces. We circulate until we can create our speed-up from the opposite half-space, which we know holds a higher value for progression. This combines both centrality and visit width rhythms, where many small switches take place until we can access the Speedup from the halfspace.

A truly adaptive team senses and reads situations, seamlessly switching between the most effective rhythm while employing key behaviours aligned with achieving those team intentions.

So the next question is regarding teaching principles. I don't have any. I instead work from the approach of 'first-principles'. Football is a living, breathing game. Players are in constant interaction within the football context, and the quality of information exchange or communication is the currency of any team. This is always the start point for me, on an individual level, this means helping players on where and when to direct their communication when away from the ball. Helping them calibrate so they can selectively perceive the most important information for them. Principles are simply tools to help players specify where and what to look for. So principles shouldn't come from the coach; they should be derived from the game itself. I can always tell how adaptive a team is by pausing a clip when the ball is travelling between two teammates and counting how many players are actively communicating with eye contact with one another. Watch an amateur team and pause the clip, then do the same with a top side, you'll notice exactly what I'm talking about. This is the core of what self-organisation means. It's become fashionable now to talk about self-organisation and adaptability without details. I completely disagree. To become adaptive, players need precise references. For example, using reference for positioning, a player must know when it's optimal to use which position. This can be the coach's role only in the initial learning stages. Later, the player must

recognise what the opponent is doing in the game and what their teammates are doing. Based on their own qualities and the qualities of their teammates, they must optimise their positioning and the actions they want to execute. If the methodology doesn't have flexibility in positioning defined in such a way, it will be suboptimal in a large number of situations. But this doesn't just magically happen. We need to sit with players and purposefully ask questions to raise situational awareness using key themes in the players' game.

I literally see a different world in each player. The key to success will definitely be combining players with the highest synergistic effect. If you can describe every action a player can effectively make by position, direction, timing, and speed in detail, you will know everything about their game. Then, you can find the player within his zone who will be most compatible with those actions, for example, I track all actions, but at the end of the analysis, I only consider actions with the highest success and failure rates. These are the two key categories we are searching for when seeking to deeply understand the player. Now we know how we can highlight the player's strengths, and secondly, what are his weaknesses, and which aspects of his game we need to learn to hide.

It is very important that each player contributes to the team's intentions in accordance with his skill set. It is crucial to understand what the player's special skills are and what his main weaknesses are. A player is optimised by teaching him to impose his virtues and hide his weaknesses. A player must be able to do this in a variety of contexts. This is a resilient, adaptable player who knows what and who he is and knows the same about his teammates and opponents. If your special skill is one-touch combinations, we have to teach you how to learn to use it as often as possible in the most different contexts. Players can become world-class if they have a couple of special skills with which they know how to impose themselves in the game. Players must learn to play football through the lens of their own and their teammates' strengths. Considering the opponent's qualities as a factor in decision-making to a greater extent can only come in phases when the player perfectly understands their team's communication. If we were to consider the opponent earlier than that, we would overload cognitive processes and cause harm. Therefore, it is essential to know the priorities – from oneself to the teammate, and then to the opponent. When a player is aware of their main qualities and the impact it has on performance, we can now help improve the efficiency of these actions.

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