



MBOKAZI'S EX COACH: WHEN I FIRST SAW HIM PLAY I CRIED



MAKGALWA: IF LEICESTER CAN DO IT, SEKHUKHUNE CAN TOO



NABI CLOSING IN ON NEW CLUB?



TWO PSL KEEPERS COULD BITE BAFANA'S WC DREAM



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THE DRAWING BOARD WITH MORITZ KOSSMANN & ACE OF THE WEEK

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DUTCH COACH SPOTTED IN CAPE TOWN

Dutch coach Andries Ulderink, who was supposed to take over at Cape Town City this season but instead joined Bayer Leverkusen as Erik Ten Hag’s assistant, is back at the club after his quick exit from the German Bundesliga outfit. The former Ajax Cape Town coach is reportedly already working closely with compatriot Jan Vreman, who has been in charge for the first six games of the campaign, and word is Ulderink will be the club’s Technical Director. City are yet to win a game since being relegated to the Motsepe Foundation Championship.



MAILULA EXPECTED IN BELGIUM THIS WEEK

South African forward Cassius Mailula is expected to arrive in Belgium to begin life with KV Kortrijk this week. The 24-year-old has been a notable absentee from the squad since his season-long loan from FC Toronto was confirmed on transfer deadline day. It’s been confirmed that paperwork issues have delayed his arrival in the country and he will now be looking to help the club in their bid for top-flight promotion.



NABI WANTED BY YANGA BUT WYDAD FAVOURITES

Nasreddine Nabi has been linked with a shock return to Young Africans as a potential replacement for Romain Folz, but sources have confirmed he could be heading back to Morocco. The Tunisian coach looks set to finalise his exit at Kaizer Chiefs in the coming days as the FIFA international break approaches—having been suspended three weeks ago while talks over mutual termination began. Wydad appears to have acted swiftly, with reported offers arriving from Etoile du Sahel, Al Ahli Tripoli and Yanga arriving with recent interest.



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HISTORY ALREADY MADE AS AMAJITA MARCH ON

Raymond Mdaka’s South African U20 side continued to make waves at the FIFA U20 World Cup in Chile, sealing their spot in the knockout stages with a gritty but stylish 2-1 win over group winners USA on Sunday.

For the reigning U20 African champions, this wasn’t just another victory, it was a statement. At a tournament where South African teams have often struggled to leave their mark, this generation of Amajita is rewriting the narrative. Scouts from across the globe have been spotted in the stands, with several of Mdaka’s charges catching the eye as the group stages unfolded.

Of course, the spotlight has been on the two European-based players, Fletcher Smythe-Lowe and Tylon Smith, both of whom delivered assured performances once again. But what has really turned heads is the fearless flair of locally-based talents: Mfundo Vilakazi, Lazola Maku, Gomolemo Kekana, Shakeel April, skipper Asekho Tiwani, and Siviwe Magidigidi all getting tongues wagging. These players have ensured that South Africa are no longer seen as plucky outsiders but as a genuine force in the competition.

The campaign didn’t start smoothly; a narrow 2-1 defeat to heavyweights France in their opener left plenty to ponder. But Amajita responded in spectacular fashion, dismantling New Caledonia 5-0, chalking up only the second-ever South African

victory at an U20 World Cup finals.

That result effectively guaranteed progression, but Sunday’s triumph over the United States raised the ceiling even higher, as this generation etched its name into history with two group-stage wins for the first time.

Group E finished dramatically, with the USA, South Africa, and France all tied on six points. Many had tipped Amajita to sneak through as one of the four best third-placed teams, but their determination and sheer willpower elevated them into second place instead.

Against the USA, it was a performance of discipline and sharp execution. Smythe-Lowe pulled off some fine saves to keep the Americans at bay, while Amajita’s counter-attacking play proved decisive. Magidigidi’s pressure forced a US own goal, before Vilakazi and April combined brilliantly in midfield to thread through Kekana, who coolly slotted home what would ultimately be the winner.

Mdaka’s men now march confidently into the Last 16, where a showdown with Group F winners Colombia awaits on Wednesday, 8 October (21h30). It promises to be another stern test, but with belief soaring and history already rewritten, there’s a growing sense that this Amajita side could deliver something truly special in Chile.

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‘SUNDOWNS FANS WILL BE VERY DISAPPOINTED BY THIS DEFEAT’

The Carling Knockout Last 16 was played over the weekend, and the big upsets were Mamelodi Sundowns losing to Marumo Gallants on penalties, while Kaizer Chiefs also exited via a penalty shootout against Stellenbosch.

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

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Miguel Cardoso Dangerous In Interviews - Lindo Pep

“If you listen to Miguel Cardoso’s interviews, you would think he has won 15 league titles.

“He comes across as very dangerous in interviews. Yet in matches, smaller clubs can still beat him. His mandate was for him to win a treble of trophies, but he is now out of yet another cup competition.

“Out of MTN8 and out of Carling Knockout.

“Congratulations to Marumo Gallants and their young coach, Alexander Lafitte. The penalties were more exciting than the match itself. The match ended in a goalless draw in full time and extra-time. 120 minutes. No Goals.

“When Sundowns got a red card, I thought Marumo Gallants would go for it, but they looked like they had a man short. Their plan was to go to penalties.

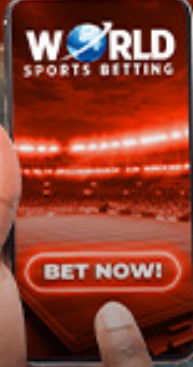
“Sundownsfanswillbeverydisappointed by this defeat, and Cardoso will be under pressure from them.”

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‘A TALENT THAT BRINGS YOU TO TEARS’

By Sinethemba Sithole

For Langalibalele Sports Academy senior coach Wonder Mnguni, it was clear that Mbekezeli Mbokazi was cut from a different cloth the moment he first laid his eyes on him.

He says it with pride, his voice thick with emotion, that when he first saw Mbokazi, tears welled up from a profound certainty. He knew instantly that the talented boy from the deep

rural areas of Hluhluwe in KwaZulu-Natal, who’d never had an opportunity, was made for professional football and would fit in perfectly. ‘TLB’ showed that again on the weekend with a world-class long-range strike against Siwelele that booked Orlando Pirates’ place in the quarter-finals of the Carling Knockout.

It was mid-2023 when Mbokazi arrived to join Langalibalele for the then-upcoming Engen Knockout Challenge in Durban.

“When we play tournaments like Engen, we usually invite players from the rural areas to give them opportunities. Mbekezeli was not the only one; there were several other players we invited for trials, then we saw talent. It’s just that I saw a different talent with him. I remember vividly, when I first saw him, tears welled up in my eyes because football is in my veins. So, when I see a special talent, I can feel it. I was like, ‘What a talent!’. He was in the under-18 team, and we were playing a good senior team, but he was just so perfect on the day. With him, we just polished little things before he left.”

Mnguni remembers the young Mbokazi as a quiet, shy boy who would always transform into a commander the moment he steps onto the field. However, that very quietness almost cost him his chance. According to Mnguni, a handful of coaches in the rural areas exploited his inability to speak up for himself, claiming him for the tournaments they were playing and nearly preventing him from going to Durban for Engen.

“When he came here, he was that boy who was a little bit shy and quiet; it’s just that whenever he entered the field, he was never quiet, he’d command. He just

didn’t care that he was new in the team; he was commanding, and you could see he didn’t want to fail. As a kid, he struggled to speak up for himself, and before he came here, coaches where he comes from took advantage of that, claiming him for their tournaments there. Even when the time came to join us for Engen, other coaches attempted to stop him. Ultimately, his uncle had to whip him with a sjambok to ensure he left for Durban, understanding that it was necessary for him to seize better opportunities.”

The sheer strength and aggressive command shown by Mbokazi on the field have generated widespread debate

“I REMEMBER VIVIDLY, WHEN I FIRST SAW HIM, TEARS WELLED UP IN MY EYES BECAUSE FOOTBALL IS IN MY VEINS. SO, WHEN I SEE A SPECIAL TALENT, I CAN FEEL IT.”





and controversy regarding his age, despite him being only 20 years old.

His powerful presence has currently made him arguably the most reliable defender in the Orlando Pirates backline. Furthermore, his outstanding displays, especially during the physical challenge against Nigeria, appear to have secured his spot in the Bafana Bafana setup. Mnguni confirmed that when Mbokazi joined Langalibalele in 2023, he was a mere 17-year-old who would only celebrate his 18th birthday a few months later, and was concurrently balancing his football with his studies in Grade 10.

“I can attest, I saw the birth certificate of Mbekezeli and I saw his ID when he came to us, he was doing Grade 10, that was in 2023. He was a bit late in school when you look at his age. And the other thing people must know, when you watch him on TV, he looks a bit older, but when you see him live, you can see he’s a young boy. That’s one thing that confuses people, and also the way he’s built and how he fights on the field, they then think he’s old, but in reality, the boy is very young.”

Mnguni admitted to being initially surprised by coach Abdeslam Ouaddou’s decision to appoint Mbokazi as the team’s vice-captain. However, he was quick to praise the young defender’s evident leadership skills, noting that these qualities have shone through despite Mbokazi having only made his Pirates debut towards the end of the last season. Mnguni particularly lauded Mbokazi for being vocal on the pitch and for willingly taking the responsibility to lead the team, demonstrating maturity beyond his age. The defender has frequently worn the captain’s armband this season whenever both first captain Nkosinathi Sibisi and first vice-captain Olisa Ndah were unavailable.

“I’m a bit surprised that in such a short period of time, he’s become a captain for Pirates. But on the other hand, I’d say he deserves it. It’s just that we’re not used to seeing a new player becoming a captain so quickly. You’ll remember he hasn’t played a full season since joining the first team. But with the qualities of leadership he has, he deserves to be a captain. You notice when he plays, he’s one of the players who gives out instructions to others. You will remember even when we played Nigeria how much he was fighting, even demonstrating to his teammates what they must do. So, he deserves an armband.”

Many, including the club’s legends, have publicly drawn comparisons between Mbokazi and the former Pirates defender Mbulelo ‘OJ’ Mabizela, who also captained Ezimnyama Ngenkani at a young age prior to moving to Tottenham Hotspur in England. Adding weight to these observations, Mnguni insists that he recognises distinct qualities within Mbokazi’s style of play that



“THE WAY HE’S BUILT AND HOW HE FIGHTS ON THE FIELD, THEY THEN THINK HE’S OLD, BUT IN REALITY, THE BOY IS VERY YOUNG.”

mirror the ones Mabizela displayed during his impressive tenure at the club.

“He reminds me of Mbulelo ‘OJ’ Mabizela, even though he has retired, but when I see Mbekezeli, I think of Mabizela. You will remember, he also captained Pirates at a very young age. He was young and was playing excellent football.”

Before his move to Pirates, Mbokazi was clearly a highly coveted talent after he was scouted during the Engen tournament. Golden Arrows, Mamelodi Sundowns, and AmaZulu were interested in signing him. The player was also offered to Kaizer Chiefs, who initially indicated they would have a look at him, but the follow-up wasn’t made. Mnguni expressed delight at the recognition he keeps getting for the instrumental role he has played in Mbokazi’s career. He takes pride in having had the opportunity to polish the young player’s talent and in being responsible for bringing him to the attention of PSL teams.

“We’re getting a lot of recognition because of Mbekezeli from the South Africans, even the young players who want to make it in football. Sometimes, you hear young boys saying, ‘Coach, can you also make me like Mbekezeli?’. We’re welcoming a lot of players to the academy. But the truth is, we all have different paths. So, there’s a lot of recognition we’re getting, even those that are not in football, laud the work that we do in the academy.”

Another promising player who comes from Langalibalele is Banele Mnguni,





a young midfielder for Polokwane City who's been impressive in the Betway Premiership this season. Having been promoted from the DDC side, Mnguni has quickly proven his worth, tallying two assists in only four league appearances.

"We've got Banele Mnguni from Mnambithi [Ladysmith], he's at Polokwane City. He came and was with us for a long time. We prepared him for a long time."

Langalibalele have also shipped out a couple of players who are moving up the ranks within the PSL clubs' junior structures. Notably, Ntando Ngcobo, a promising left-footed winger, whose gradual progression at Pirates mirrors that of Mbokazi.

"We've got Thalente Ndlovu in the DDC team of AmaZulu, he's from this academy and I can tell you South Africa will see football in that boy, he's too talented. There's a boy from Mpumalanga, Nkosinathi Thwala [at Kruger United], he came here at the age of 14. We also have Ntando Ngcobo at Pirates in the elite junior team, he's very talented, just like Mohau Nkota."

To produce even more top-flight-ready players, Mnguni says their strategy is to begin developing players from the age of six. Their ultimate goal is to establish a specialised school where children can participate in a variety of different sports.

"The big dream we have is to build a sports development school and recruit the kids at a young age. We'd want them to stay in school while we're preparing them at an early age, so that when they reach 18, 19 years, they are ready to play for any team around the world. Most of the time, when they reach this age, you find that there's a lot that they are still lacking. So, we're out here looking for investors who can help us do this because South Africa has a lot of talent. As Langalibalele Sports Academy, we're not only about football. We want to have swimming, cycling and many, many sporting codes. We want



"WHEN I SEE MBEKEZELI, I THINK OF MABIZELA. YOU WILL REMEMBER, HE ALSO CAPTAINED PIRATES AT A VERY YOUNG AGE. HE WAS YOUNG AND WAS PLAYING EXCELLENT FOOTBALL."

to continue helping out the kids from the rural areas. They walk long distances when they go to school, that on its own is part of training; that's why the likes of Mbokazi are so strong. In fact, if you can notice, most of the players that come from those areas are so strong, there are mountains there and a lot that makes you stronger."

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ARUBI AND NTWARI COULD BITE THE HAND THAT FEEDS THEM

By Matshelane Mamabolo

South Africa’s path to the 2026 FIFA World Cup could be blocked by men who earn their living right here in the Betway Premiership. It’s one of football’s little ironies that players familiar to our strikers, men who face them week in and week out, might now stand between Bafana Bafana and a ticket to the global showpiece co-hosted by the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

Two goalkeepers in particular – Washington Arubi of Zimbabwe, and Fiacre Ntwari of Rwanda – have emerged as the unlikely gatekeepers to South Africa’s qualification hopes.

It’s not the first time club football has collided awkwardly with national ambitions. The discerning soccer fan will recall 2002, when South Korea’s Ahn Jung-hwan scored the golden goal that eliminated Italy from the World Cup – only for his Italian club, Perugia, to terminate his contract the very next day. The owner infamously claimed he could not pay someone who had brought shame to his country.

Thankfully, no such drama will unfold in the Premier Soccer League, but the sentiment will resonate if any of these familiar goalkeepers frustrate Bafana’s forwards. After all, Arubi and Ntwari are not unknown foreigners – they’re part of South African football’s week-to-week fabric.

The veteran wall: Washington Arubi

“ARUBI WAS BRILLIANT AT THE WEEKEND, AND THE FACT THAT THE BULK OF BAFANA PLAYERS COME FROM MAMELODI SUNDOWNS WILL SEE HIM SPURRED ON AFTER HE WON AGAINST THEM.”

At 40, Washington Arubi is the definition of experience. Currently with Marumo Gallants, the veteran Zimbabwean has been around long enough to face generations of Bafana hopefuls.

Domestically, Arubi has built a reputation as a dependable, if unspectacular, performer. His positional awareness and calm distribution have helped Gallants hold their own in tight matches. He has often shown that reflexes and experience can outwit youthful exuberance. In last season’s Betway Premiership campaign, Arubi kept six clean sheets and was twice named Man of the Match – both in games where he thwarted attacks led by current Bafana regulars.

Just this past weekend, he was the hero as he helped Gallants knock Mamelodi Sundowns out of the Carling Knockout, saving spot-kicks by Marcello Allende and Mosa Lebusa to outdo Bafana captain and goalkeeper Ronwen Williams.

For Zimbabwe, Arubi’s leadership has

been invaluable. Even though the Warriors are yet to win a match in this qualifying group (four draws and four losses so far), Arubi remains one of their most consistent performers. His familiarity with South Africa's attackers could make him a difficult obstacle in Friday's match out in Durban.

Renowned television analyst and former eSwatini international goalkeeper William Shongwe, who has kept goals for both Kaizer Chiefs and Orlando Pirates during his playing days, knows only too well the important role Arubi plays for Zimbabwe.

"He was brilliant at the weekend, and the fact that the bulk of Bafana players come from Mamelodi Sundowns will see him spurred on after he won against them. What he has been able to achieve at Marumo Gallants is nothing short of a miracle because he has been key to them having the good season they are having. Gallants' progress in the Betway Premiership is massive, and lately, when they are facing Arubi, I have no doubt the strikers have some shivers down their spine because he is a big factor. And now he will go into Friday's match on the back of a massive achievement of having outdone Bafana's number one [Ronwen Williams] in his specialty – saving penalty kicks, and that will be a big factor in the match."

Arubi is but just one of many Zimbabwean players who earn their salaries in the South African league, and Shongwe foresees that, plus the fact that they have other players who have previously played here as something that will spur the Warriors into a good performance, despite the fact that they are long out of contention for World Cup qualification notwithstanding.

"Look, you have to realise that apart from Arubi, Zimbabwe also have [his teammate at Gallants, Daniel] Msendami, Divine Lunga [of Sundowns] and [Thandolwenkosi] Ngwenya [of AmaZulu]. And then there are the likes of Khama Billiat, Marshall Munetsi, Knowledge Musona and Terrence Dzvukamanja, who have previously played in the PSL, who will take on Bafana in Durban, and this could become a big factor in the outcome of the match. Sure, Zimbabwe have no business fighting this cause, but there's a lot of pride for them to bow out of



"ZIMBABWE HAVE NO BUSINESS FIGHTING THIS CAUSE, BUT THERE'S A LOT OF PRIDE FOR THEM TO BOW OUT OF THIS CAMPAIGN BY BEATING A TEAM THAT IS TRYING TO QUALIFY."

this campaign by beating a team that is trying to qualify. Players also have individual targets and goals that they want to achieve, so sometimes matches become very personal. And I foresee this being the case with this match."

After Zimbabwe, Bafana will complete their qualifying campaign at Mbombela Stadium against a Rwanda side that beat them 2-0 in the first round.

The East African country are also still in the running, albeit only just, and they owe that to the heroics of a goalkeeper who plies his trade in South Africa – Kaizer Chiefs' Fiacre Ntwari. Unlike Arubi, though, he is not a regular.

Fiacre Ntwari: The Kaizer Chiefs understudy with big-game nerve

Logic suggests Bafana should be able to put a few goals past Fiacre Ntwari, Rwanda's number one who has struggled for minutes at Chiefs this season, when the two countries clash in the final qualifier at Mbombela Stadium next Tuesday. He ironically played his first match for Amakhosi since last November at the weekend when Chiefs lost out to Stellenbosch in a shoot-out from the penalty spot.

But logic doesn't always survive the heat of competition.

Ntwari might lack match fitness, but he



has already shown his ability to rise to the occasion. In Rwanda's 2–0 victory over Bafana in Butare – played on a heavy, rain-soaked pitch that Hugo Broos later lamented as “unplayable” – Ntwari made a series of stunning saves, including a reflex stop from Evidence Makgopa that could have changed the match. He also had a superb game against Nigeria.

No wonder Shongwe has been left impressed: “He has been unbelievable in the matches I’ve watched him play in the qualifiers. He was way above what you see him doing locally. Even if he is not that active in local football, he is still being preferred as the number one for Rwanda, and he has not disappointed.”

Like most, Shongwe was taken aback by Chiefs’ decision to finally give him game-time in Sunday’s clash against Stellenbosch, but he feels the man justified his presence on the starting line-up.

“I don’t know why Chiefs decided to give him game-time, but he did very well to prove the technical team right because he kept a clean sheet for the 120 minutes. And we all know you can’t put anything against him for having lost in the lottery of the shoot-out. The man was able to keep a clean sheet in open play, and that basically tells the story of why he is a key man for his country, and he might be a big factor again for their match against Bafana Bafana.”

His being impressed by the opposition goalkeepers notwithstanding, Shongwe believes coach Hugo Broos has done too great a job with Bafana to be thwarted in his quest for World Cup qualification.

“Sure, these two men are going to have a say in whether Bafana go to the World Cup, but there’s enough quality in Hugo Broos’ team to see Bafana get over these two sides.”

There’s more than just quality, actually, for Bafana to have the advantage of playing on home soil.

“NTWARI HAS BEEN UNBELIEVABLE IN THE MATCHES I’VE WATCHED HIM PLAY IN THE QUALIFIERS. HE WAS WAY ABOVE WHAT YOU SEE HIM DOING LOCALLY.”

That Rwanda result against Bafana, coupled with their home victories over Lesotho in Durban and Zimbabwe in Orlando – both technically “away” games on South African soil – has kept them in the qualification mix. But it has also sparked a debate about fairness and logistics.

Gernot Rohr, the coach of Benin, who have taken over the lead via goal difference in Group C after Bafana were docked the points they won in beating Lesotho 2-0 but having fielded a defaulter in Teboho Mokoena, who should have sat the game out due to having two yellow cards, has been among the most vocal critics.

He spoke out about that yellow card saga, saying Benin would have approached their second round clash with Bafana played in Abidjan differently – by being cautious and ‘played for a draw’ had FIFA already docked South Africa those three points then.

“South Africa are playing their final two matches at home,” he complained. “And they have already played seven of their 10 games in South Africa. That’s a big advantage. Our team has had to play away for more than two years – it is not balanced.”

His frustrations echo a wider concern in African football – the uneven distribution of home advantage due to stadium unavailability and CAF sanctions. Out of 52 scheduled matches in this phase of the qualifiers, nearly 20 will be played on neutral or foreign grounds.

For Bafana, playing on home turf might not guarantee safety. The Betway Premiership’s cosmopolitan nature means nearly every opposing squad features players who ply their trade in South Africa.

Rwanda’s Ntwari trains daily with some of Bafana’s key attackers. Zimbabwe’s contingent features several current and former PSL stars, all familiar with the tempo and style of South African football.

That familiarity neutralises some of the usual home advantage. When these players step onto the pitch in Durban or Mbombela, they are not visitors – they are residents of the same footballing ecosystem.

With Lesotho set to host Nigeria in Polokwane and then Zimbabwe at the same Peter Mokaba Stadium, the southern region’s qualifying group has become a logistical jigsaw puzzle. Every point matters, every goal could define destiny. For Bafana, who will play Zimbabwe and Rwanda at ‘home’, the expectation is clear: win both, and the dream stays alive.

It’s a peculiar conflict: the same goalkeepers who earn their living in the PSL may now dash the hopes of their South African employers and teammates. Football has a way

of blurring those lines – of turning colleagues into adversaries, even if only for 90 minutes.

If Bafana are to reach the Promised Land, they must show ruthlessness in front of goal. Arubi’s age might invite doubt, but his experience commands respect. Fiacre Ntwari’s limited minutes at Chiefs might tempt complacency, but that would be a grave mistake.

Hugo Broos has preached patience, structure, and belief. But perhaps what’s most needed now is a dose of cold-blooded finishing. Because the path to the World Cup may depend on how well South Africa can solve a duo of familiar puzzles – both wearing gloves, both earning pay cheques right here at home.

As the qualifiers edge toward their conclusion, the storylines are rich with irony. Two men – employed by South African clubs – could deny South Africa a place at football’s biggest stage. It’s a testament to the PSL’s strength, but also a sobering reminder that familiarity offers no immunity in football.

Bafana Bafana’s fate may rest not in distant stadiums, but in the reflexes of goalkeepers who know our strikers better than anyone else. And that, perhaps, is the most South African twist of all.





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‘IF LEICESTER COULD DO IT, SEKHUKHUNE CAN TOO’

After an impressive 2024/25 Betway Premiership season where he helped Sekhukhune United to a fourth-place finish, winger KELETSO MAKGALWA is determined to continue where he left off this term. Makgalwa contributed six goals and 11 assists for Babina Noko last season, which also culminated in him being nominated for two awards, including the PSL Player of the Season. This season, he has provided five assists so far to help the Limpopo-based outfit to second position on the league log with 20 points, having suffered one loss in nine outings. The 28-year-old boosts confidence when he speaks about this season with iDiski Times journalist LETHABO KGANYAGO in this edition, where he boldly believes his side has the potential to do the unthinkable and actually challenge for the league title. Makgalwa also speaks about his partnership with veteran striker Bradley Grobler and their collective target, and his call-up to the Bafana Bafana preliminary squad for the upcoming 2026 World Cup qualifiers against Zimbabwe and Rwanda.

Lethabo Kganyago: Keletso, we always appreciate your time. You guys are enjoying a good start to the season so far. How are you feeling about it?

Keletso Makgalwa: I’m very happy for myself and the team, the way we started the season. I think we had a good pre-season; everyone was

working very hard, and the coach also planned the season very well. I think with the new signings, also, they gelled very well, and we are a good group, so it’s easier to gel in the team. So I think that makes us win the games since the start of the season.

LK: Last season, 11 assists, plus a Player of the Season nomination, how did you feel about all that?

KM: (Sighs) I’d say I was nervous, and I was so happy, especially to get recognised from the PSL after the hard work. I think I have been working very hard, and what I have achieved last season, it was not a fluke because since I came back to the PSL, I told myself that I need to compete for at least one award. I was blessed with two, which I’m so grateful for and also to thank the coach, the previous coaches, coach [Lehlohonolo] Seema and coach Eric as well, the management of the team and the players who helped me to reach my goal and everyone involved.

LK: Coach Eric spoke about that, that you have to be able to repeat what you did last season to prove it wasn’t a fluke. Is that challenge accepted for you?

KM: Yes, for me it is challenge accepted, and you know every team now is gunning for me. That’s what he also told me, and I need to step up



my game. If I was working hard last season, now I have to work extra hard to find solutions, and it's something that I'm working on at this present time. I wouldn't say I'm at my peak at this point in time since the season has started, but I'm getting there, surely, slowly. I think everything is working out with the help of the coaches and the players. I think it's coming together now.

LK: Bradley told us at the beginning of the season about yours and his pact, 20 assists for you and how he is going to help you with that. How's that partnership?

KM: For me, I know Brad, I know 'Sniper'. I was at home when they announced Bradley, and I told my parents that this season I'm sure I'm going to have 20 plus assists, and it's possible with Bradley. And I spoke to him also, and I told him that this season I want 20 assists, and he told me straight that I'm going to help you to achieve that. And so far so good. I'm on five at the moment, so 15 left, and he's on six goals, so 20 is possible this season.

LK: You were knocked out of MTN8, but your form in the league also means you have a target on your back, how far can you push this form, staying on top?

KM: For us, we have to work hard, and it was so disappointing for us to not reach the MTN8 final because we spoke as the guys and the coach that we need to win a cup this season. But we still have two and counting the league, also, anything is possible. If Leicester

“WHAT I HAVE ACHIEVED LAST SEASON, IT WAS NOT A FLUKE.”

[City] could do it we can also do it, and I think if we can get one [trophy] this season I think that's what we have challenged ourselves to do.

*[*Editor's note: The interview was done prior to Sekhukhune's exit from the Carling Knockout on Saturday]*

LK: And lastly, congratulations for being selected for the Bafana preliminary squad for the World Cup qualifiers. Not selected this time for the final squad, but how much do you want to break into the team?

KM: To be honest, I have been praying about it, you know, to get an opportunity to represent my country. I think it's everyone's dream to represent their country, and seeing myself in the preliminary squad, I was so excited. Anything is possible.

LK: Thank you, Keletso and all the best.



LANGERMAN ON RETURN TO FOOTBALL & WHAT'S GOING ON AT SUNDOWNS

*Three years since he last played in the professional set-up, veteran defender **TEBOGO LANGERMAN** is back after signing with Limpopo Motsepe Foundation Championship side Baroka FC last month. The 39-year-old spent the last season as player-coach at ABC Motsepe League side Sunrise FC in Lephalale in Limpopo, a period he tells iDiski Times journalist **LETHABO KGANYAGO** was important for him as he started his coaching journey. The former SuperSport United, Mamelodi Sundowns and Swallows defender opens up about how Bakgaga chairman Khurishi Mphahlele approached him and how this opportunity is another chance to be exposed to a different division while he wants to help them gain promotion. Langerman also touched on current defenders that have impressed him, the dark horse sides with potential to challenge the league title this season, as his former club hasn't really convinced him and why he believes Bafana Bafana can qualify for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, among other things.*

Lethabo Kganyago: Tebogo, thank you for your time. How's everything going at Baroka?

Tebogo Langerman: I have settled very well since arriving here. Even though I haven't played my first game, I have settled in very well. The chairman, the coach, players and everyone has welcomed me well, and I was impressed with the facility, the Baroka village. I also understand that Mafori group has partnered with the club, and everyone is happy.

LK: We know that you were working in Lephalale as a player-coach for Sunrise FC. How did you join Baroka?

TL: It's the chairman. He approached

me in Lephalale because he was very impressed with how I played and how the team I coached played. He was really impressed, and he signed two players from my team, and he approached me. I said to him no because I wanted to retire because I have been playing for a long time. So at first I didn't accept the offer. I also thought he wasn't that serious, and I had my own plans of returning to Jo'burg to focus on my coaching and other things like getting into analysing matches on TV.

LK: What was so important that he said that changed your mind this time around?

TL: I think after a month of being in Jo'burg from Lephalale the chairman called and I thought, 'That man, again' (chuckles). He said, 'May you please come and play for my team?' For that fact that he actually asked, I thought this man must really need me, and he must be seeing something in me that I'm not seeing. I had really thought I was done with Limpopo.

LK: What is your role in the team?

TL: For now, I'm a player, I'm not a player-coach, and my experience is why the chairman hired me. He told me straight that he wants to win the league, and he needs my experience on how to win things and for me to encourage the guys.

LK: I'm sure coach Dan Malesela must also be happy to have you there...

TL: Coach Dan is happy to have me because we spoke. We've known each other from a distance, so it was our first time meeting, and I'm also

happy to learn from him because he is different to other coaches.

LK: And what do you make of the squad?

TL: We've got a top squad, experienced guys from the PSL and the guys from the Motsepe Championship, and it is guys who are really hungry with quality. It's up to us collectively to get the right balance to win the league.

LK: Let's talk about your time in Lephalale. Did you have fun there?

TL: I'd say so because I've also learned a lot as a player-coach. It was tough, it was stressful, but it was worth it. I have shared the experience gained from past teams like Sundowns, SuperSport, from Gavin Hunt and Pitso Mosimane. I used that experience to win the league in Lephalale. Even the way I reinforced the team I knew the kind of players I wanted. It was not easy, but we were successful.

LK: Was it difficult to leave because it sounds like you were building something solid?

TL: It was hurtful because I really thought that we could go to the playoffs and something happened, cases and stuff. And to be honest there is a lot of talent in Lephalale. When Baroka took two players after we lost the cases I felt better. It felt like we achieved something and kids from Lephalale could see it's possible.

LK: Who did you work with there?

TL: I worked closely with Punch Masenamela there, and another youth coach at Sunrise, and [Joseph] Molangoana arrived in the second round of the league. But mostly it was Punch Masenamela, both of us left-backs, we competed for the same position at Sundowns. Now we were together in Lephalale, and we fought so hard to fix things.

LK: As far as your coaching badges are concerned, how far are you?

TL: Right now, I only have a coaching D Licence, and I'm going to do my C Licence soon and a B Licence, but for now, I haven't had time because you can see now I must focus on playing.

LK: You played in the Premier Division, coached in the ABC Motsepe division, now you are playing in the second tier, how much are you embracing this opportunity?



"I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING THERE, IT'S NO LONGER THE SAME. UNLESS THEY CAN FIX THINGS QUICKLY, BUT WE ALL CAN SEE SUNDOWNS IS NOT REALLY CONVINCING."

TL: I'm grateful to God for this opportunity because I think he knows where he is directing me to, because I'd have covered almost all the divisions of football in South Africa. I started on a high level as a player and came down as a player-coach, now here at Baroka my mindset is like I'm a coach. I think it's preparing me for times I'll be coaching in the Betway Premiership. To have the knowledge of what's happening from the grassroots to the top, because I was only familiar with what happens at the top.

LK: You used to boss the left-back position, now, there are many coming up. What's your assessment of the young defenders and do you think there's a lot that's changed about that position?

TL: Now there's modern football, converted left-backs and all that. I think we do have good left-backs, but I don't think there is intensity or the speed. Now it's more tactical than before. We used to work hard, we used to run non-stop. But if there are good right-backs right now, one of them is the player who left [Orlando] Pirates for [Kaizer] Chiefs.

LK: Thabiso Monyane..

TL: Yes, and the one from Polokwane City, [Thabang] Matuludi, and he just needs to work on certain things, he's very good, top talent. He needs some help, but he has potential. Those are the full-backs I'm impressed with, but they still need to work on their game.

LK: Who was your best partner when you were in the Premier Division?

TL: [Ricardo] Nascimento and Alje Schut, those were my best partnerships at the back. They were very good tactically and on the ball. They made things easier for me, I could push up all the time.

LK: Which attackers and or strikers have troubled you the most?

TL: There is a guy who used to play for Platinum Stars, Mduduzi Nyanda, and strikers – Collins Mbesuma. I underestimated him because of his body, and he once turned and left me hanging inside the box. (Laughs) I was humbled and taught a lesson to not underestimate people. I saw his body and thought this guy is too heavy, while instead he was powerful, quick and pacy. And I also played with top strikers, and they made things easy for me because in my day, I didn't defend a lot. I used to go up a lot. I played with guys like Khama Billiat and Percy Tau, good top strikers.

LK: Your generation at Sundowns was just something else, and I have to ask if you think this current generation can emulate what you guys did?

TL: I don't see it now because now obvious they've got problems you can see. Team performance is not the same. It was promising when Rulani [Mokwena] was the coach, and I think even when Manqoba was there. But now I don't know what's happening there, it's no longer the same. Unless they can fix things quickly, but we all can see Sundowns is not really convincing.

LK: Hopefully, people don't throw stones at you for this, but does this look like that season where they can really be challenged for the league title?

TL: Yes, and I see Sekhukhune [United], I see TS Galaxy, I'm not too sure about Pirates. But you see, TS Galaxy and Sekhukhune, I think they will challenge in the league this season if they are consistent. If you check, TS Galaxy is coming up slowly, and no one is watching them.

LK: Could be because of how they started, and the same can be said for Sekhukhune that no one is taking them seriously despite spending the first eight weeks on top...

TL: And they've got a lot of experience there [Sekhukhune], they just need to be consistent. They must just win their games and not think about much. They have consistently finished in the top five every season, there is something



“TS GALAXY AND SEKHUKHUNE, I THINK THEY WILL CHALLENGE IN THE LEAGUE THIS SEASON IF THEY ARE CONSISTENT.”

good they are doing.

LK: And lastly Tebogo, what do you make of the current Bafana squad and can we qualify for the World Cup?

TL: I haven't been really following Bafana Bafana, but I see in the news that they are left with two qualifying games. I think we'll qualify if we win both games, and Bafana have been winning their games even with new players; they do well. Maybe I need to follow coach Hugo [Broos] and see how he does things? I mean, he can change the whole team, but Bafana Bafana will play and still win against anybody.

LK: Right, I mean, look at how someone like Mohau Nkota did against the big boys of Nigeria.

TL: And you remember Nigeria used to beat us all the time. We were the first group with Stuart Baxter to beat Nigeria in Nigeria, and it was difficult because physically, they are strong. But now it looks much easier. That means the coach is a very good coach. I'm going to start watching Bafana more and study how they play, movements and staff.

LK: Maybe you should really follow him. Thank you so much for speaking to us.



LOCAL KEEPERS LEADING THE WAY

It may still be early days, but the 2025/26 season has already offered plenty for South African football fans to cheer, especially between the posts. For years, there's been a growing worry that the art of goalkeeping was slipping away from local hands, with foreign stoppers often preferred in the Betway Premiership. But this campaign is beginning to flip that narrative.



So far, South African keepers are not only playing, they're excelling. In fact, 75% of the league's top 12 statistically-based goalkeeping performers are homegrown talents.

And it's not just about numbers, it's about impact. We've seen penalty saves that have changed games, commanding presences in the box that have inspired backlines, and keepers announcing themselves on the big stage with fearless performances. Veterans, too, are reminding us why experience matters, pulling off big saves in high-pressure moments that steady their teams when it matters most.

The backdrop to this resurgence has been a frenetic start to the 2025/26 season. With some clubs already a third of the way through their league fixtures, matches have been coming thick and fast, leaving little room for error. In such a climate, reliable goalkeeping can make the difference between climbing the table or getting stuck at the wrong end. That South African keepers are standing tall under this pressure only makes the story more encouraging.

For the national setup, it's a timely development. With Bafana Bafana's World Cup qualifiers looming and the Africa Cup of Nations just months away, the sudden depth in goal is a problem Hugo Broos and his technical team will welcome. For too long, there's been anxiety about who could take the gloves if Ronwen Williams wasn't available. Now, with multiple options proving themselves week in, week out, the future looks more secure.

The 2025/26 season may well go down as the year South African goalkeepers turned the tide, reclaiming their place at the heart of the domestic game and reminding everyone just how vital their role is in shaping results.

5 Clean Sheets

1. Sipho Chaine (Orlando Pirates)

Bafana Bafana's number two has been in good form for Orlando Pirates, turning a shaky opening into a statement run of performances. After conceding three goals in his first two matches, Chaine has slammed the door shut, stringing together five consecutive league clean sheets (and even eight across all competitions). It hasn't just been about the numbers, though the stats do tell their own story: 10 saves at an average of 1.4 per game underline his sharpness and reliability. This purple patch couldn't come at a better time. With the Buccaneers climbing the table and momentum swinging back in their favour, Chaine's form will please Abdeslam Ouaddou and his technical team. When the league resumes after the international break, all eyes will be on whether Chaine can extend this run. If his current form is anything to go by, opposition strikers may be in for more frustration as he looks to cement his reputation as one of the Betway Premiership's most dependable stoppers.

2. Brandon Petersen (Kaizer Chiefs)

It's been a strong start to the season for Petersen at Kaizer Chiefs, the experienced goalkeeper making his presence felt both with the gloves and with his voice. The 31-year-old began the campaign in flawless fashion, keeping five clean sheets in his first five matches, a run that gave Amakhosi the kind of defensive platform they've been craving in recent years. The last three fixtures have proved more testing, with five goals conceded, but Petersen has stood tall under pressure, racking up 13 saves so far this season at an average of 1.6 per game. Time and again, he's shown sharp reflexes to keep Chiefs in games, whether it's fingertip stops from close range or commanding interventions under the high ball. Beyond the numbers, Petersen's value is just as clear in the intangibles. A product of Ajax Cape Town and once a steady hand at Bidvest Wits, his leadership has become a defining trait: constantly barking instructions and organising his backline. For a side trying to re-establish its identity, that vocal presence has been as vital as any save. With the season still in its early stretch, Petersen's form will be key to how far Chiefs can go. If he maintains this balance of reliability and authority, he won't just be the last line of defence, he'll be one of the cornerstones of their campaign.

3. Darren Keet (Durban City)

At 36, many goalkeepers are winding down their careers, but for Darren Keet, the flame seems to be burning brighter than ever. The former Bafana Bafana regular has proven to be a shrewd acquisition for Gavin Hunt's side, settling into

the number one role with the kind of calm assurance only years of experience can provide. Nine games into the campaign, Keet has already registered five clean sheets and conceded just seven times, numbers that speak volumes about his reliability between the posts, and his tally of 16 saves, averaging 1.8 per game, shows that.

The former Bidvest Wits and Cape Town City man is showing, quite emphatically, that age is just a number. If anything, his years in the game have given him an edge: composure under pressure, sharp decision-making, and a voice of authority that anchors the entire backline. Younger teammates feed off his presence, and Hunt, who has worked with Keet before, knows exactly the kind of mentality he brings to a dressing room. He may no longer be part of the Bafana setup, but on current evidence, Keet remains one of the most dependable goalkeepers in South African football.

4. Ronwen Williams (Mamelodi Sundowns)



Bafana Bafana’s skipper and undisputed number one between the posts has started the season in commanding fashion. In his 10 appearances so far, he’s kept five clean sheets and conceded just five goals, a record that underlines his consistency and authority at the back. Perhaps the highlight to date was the penalty stop against Durban City that showcased both his reflexes and mental steel. That moment wasn’t just about a save; it was a statement of leadership, the kind that lifts teammates and deflates opponents. In total, he’s racked up 15 saves, averaging 1.5 per game, but numbers only tell half the story. His presence commands respect, his distribution sparks attacks, and his organisation of the defence ensures that the unit in front of him rarely loses shape. Williams is entering what many would call the peak years of a goalkeeper’s career, and it shows. Calm under pressure, vocal when needed, and always willing to put his body on the line, he has

become the anchor around which both Bafana Bafana and his club build their confidence.

4 Clean Sheets

5. Brian Bwire (Polokwane City) KENYA

Rise and Shine’s reliable Kenyan shot-stopper has quickly emerged as the standout foreign goalkeeper in the Betway Premiership this season. In just nine appearances, he’s already collected four clean sheets, a record that speaks volumes about his consistency and composure under pressure. With 15 saves to his name, an average of 1.7 per game, Bwire has only been beaten five times, a stat that underlines just how difficult he is to breach. Bwire’s form has been central to City’s strong start to the campaign, instilling belief in his teammates and frustrating some of the league’s most feared attackers. He has brought both confidence and stability, proving himself to be one of Polokwane’s best signings in recent years.

3 Clean Sheets

6. Renaldo Leaner (Sekhukhune United)

Leaner may have featured in just four league matches for Sekhukhune United so far, but he’s certainly made them count. Alternating between Toaster Nsabata and Manuel Sapunga in Babina Noko’s goalkeeping rotation, the 28-year-old has impressed with three clean sheets and conceded only once. His numbers speak for themselves, too, 10 saves at an average of 2.5 per game. What makes his story even more compelling is the unconventional path he’s taken to finally earn his place among South Africa’s top-flight keepers. A product of the Ajax Cape Town academy, Leaner’s journey wound through university football with UWC, a rare detour for a professional goalkeeper, before returning to the PSL with Cape Town Spurs and Maritzburg United. Now at Sekhukhune, he’s seizing his moment, not only becoming a trusted figure for Babina Noko but also edging into Bafana Bafana contention. It’s been a colourful career full of detours and comebacks, but Leaner is showing that patience, persistence and hard work can finally pay off at the highest level.

7. Sage Stephens (Stellenbosch)

It hasn’t exactly been the dream start to the league campaign for Stellenbosch, but Sage Stephens continues to stand tall between the posts. The veteran keeper has managed three clean sheets, yet he’s also had to pick the ball out of his net eight times, two of those from the penalty spot. That doesn’t tell the full story, though, because the 34-year-old has been one of the busiest goalkeepers in the league so far, racking up 24 saves at an impressive average of 2.7 per game.



Stephens remains every bit the reliable figure who finally broke into the Bafana Bafana setup in 2024, rewarded for his consistency in the Cape Winelands.

2 Clean Sheets

8. Thakasani Mbanjwa (Golden Arrows)

Mbanjwa began the season in the green of Siwelele, where two of the three goals he's let in so far came during his brief spell there. Since switching to Golden Arrows, though, he looks to have found his rhythm. The 25-year-old has hit the ground running at Manqoba Mngqithi's side, keeping back-to-back clean sheets and immediately instilling confidence in the Arrows' backline. What's stood out most has been his sharp shot-stopping, 14 saves already at an impressive average of 3.5 per game. For a goalkeeper still shaping his top-flight career, it's a hugely encouraging start, and if he continues on this trajectory, Arrows may well have signed a reliable last line of defence for the long season ahead.

9. Ian Otieno (Richards Bay) KENYA

The second Kenyan to feature on this list, Otieno has made a steady start to life between the posts for Richards Bay. In his four appearances so far, he's managed to keep two clean sheets while conceding four goals, one of those coming from the spot. What stands out is his calm presence at the back, complementing his seven saves at an average of 1.8 per game. He is also one of two Richards Bay goalkeepers to make this list, underlining the competition within their squad.

10. Darren Johnson (AmaZulu)

The third former Ajax Cape Town graduate to make this list, Johnson has been turning heads with his performances for Usuthu. In five appearances so far, he's already kept two clean sheets while conceding only three goals, a tidy record that belies the intensity of the challenges he's faced. His 18 saves, averaging an impressive 3.6 per game, highlight just how busy he's been, and his standout moment came last week when he denied a penalty against Kaizer Chiefs, a display of nerves of steel under pressure. At 28, Johnson is clearly seizing his opportunity under Arthur Zwane and has begun to knock firmly on Bafana Bafana's door.

11. Salim Magoola (Richards Bay) UGANDA

In South African football, it's rare to see a goalkeeping roundup without a Ugandan name featured, and Magoola continues that proud tradition. The Richards Bay stopper has been alternating with Otieno this season, and in his six appearances, he's already kept two clean sheets

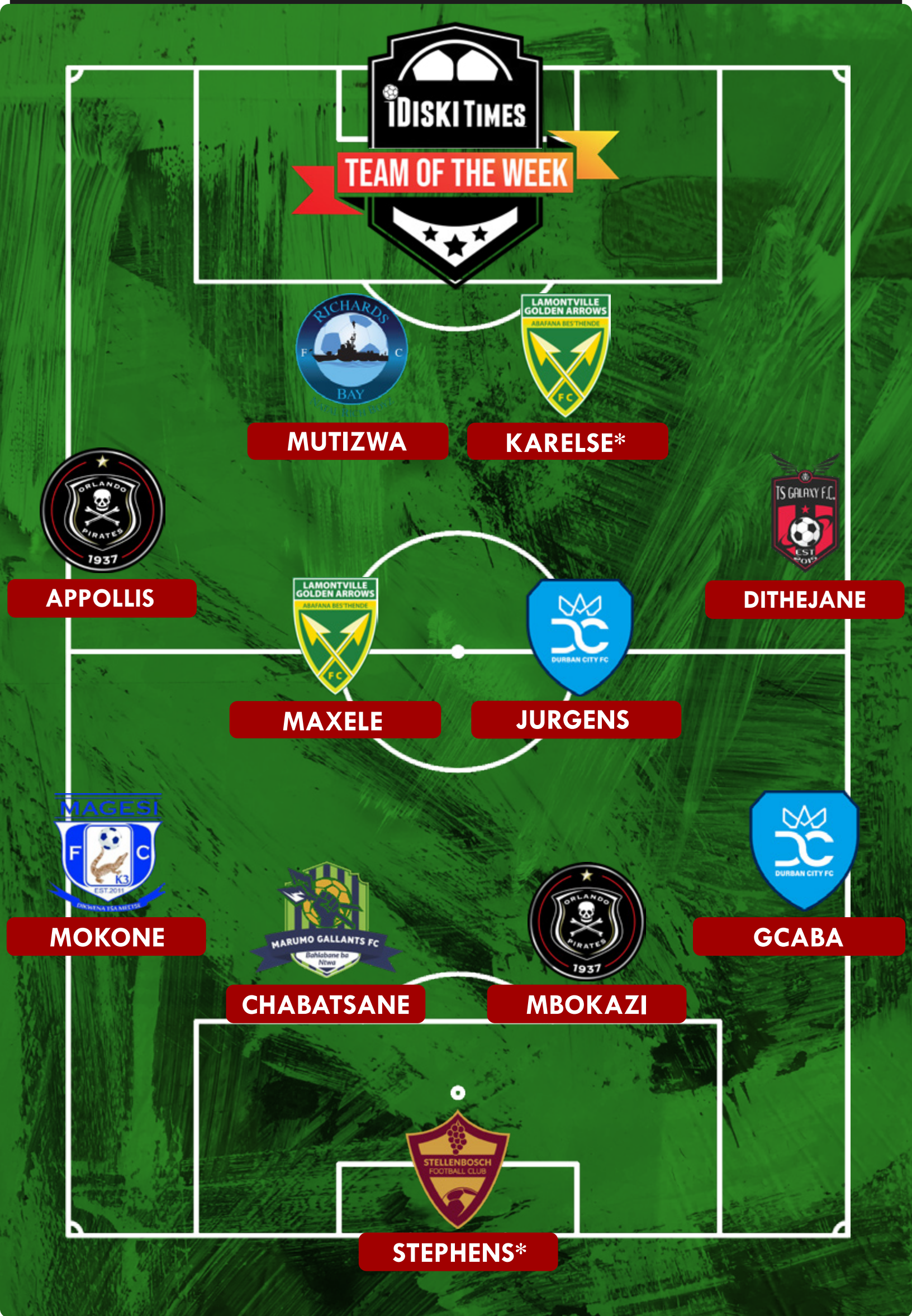
while conceding five goals. His 17 saves, averaging 2.8 per game, underline just how active and crucial he's been between the sticks. For Richards Bay, having two reliable goalkeepers sharing duties has provided healthy competition and depth.

12. Ricardo Goss (Siwelele)

Siwelele's rocky start to the season has made life tough for Bafana Bafana's regular number three. In his eight appearances so far, Goss has conceded eight goals, yet there have been bright spots, two clean sheets highlighting his ability to rise to the occasion even when the team struggles. His 19 saves, averaging 2.4 per game, underline just how busy he's been and how often he's kept his side in matches. Despite the challenging environment at Siwelele, Goss continues to demonstrate the qualities that earned him a regular spot in the national setup: sharp reflexes, vocal command of his area, and a calmness that inspires confidence in his defenders. For a goalkeeper in a team fighting to find form, he has been a rare, consistent presence.



IDISKI TEAM OF THE CARLING KNOCKOUT ROUND OF 16



ACE OF THE WEEK:
MBEKEZELI MBOKAZI

Our iDiski Times Ace of the Week goes to none other than Orlando Pirates’ rising star Mbekezeli Mbokazi, whose thunderous late strike lit up Saturday’s clash and sealed the Buccaneers’ place in the Carling Knockout quarter-finals. It had been a tough contest against a stubborn Siwelele side, who looked determined to drag the game into extra-time. But with the clock running down and tension thick in the air, the 20-year-old Pirates skipper seized the moment. Picking up the ball just inside the opposition half, Mbokazi surged forward with intent. Spotting the gap, he unleashed a rocket from distance that screamed past the goalkeeper and buried itself in the net. It was a strike worthy of winning any cup tie, a statement from Mbokazi that he’s ready to take centre stage when the pressure is at its peak.



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.

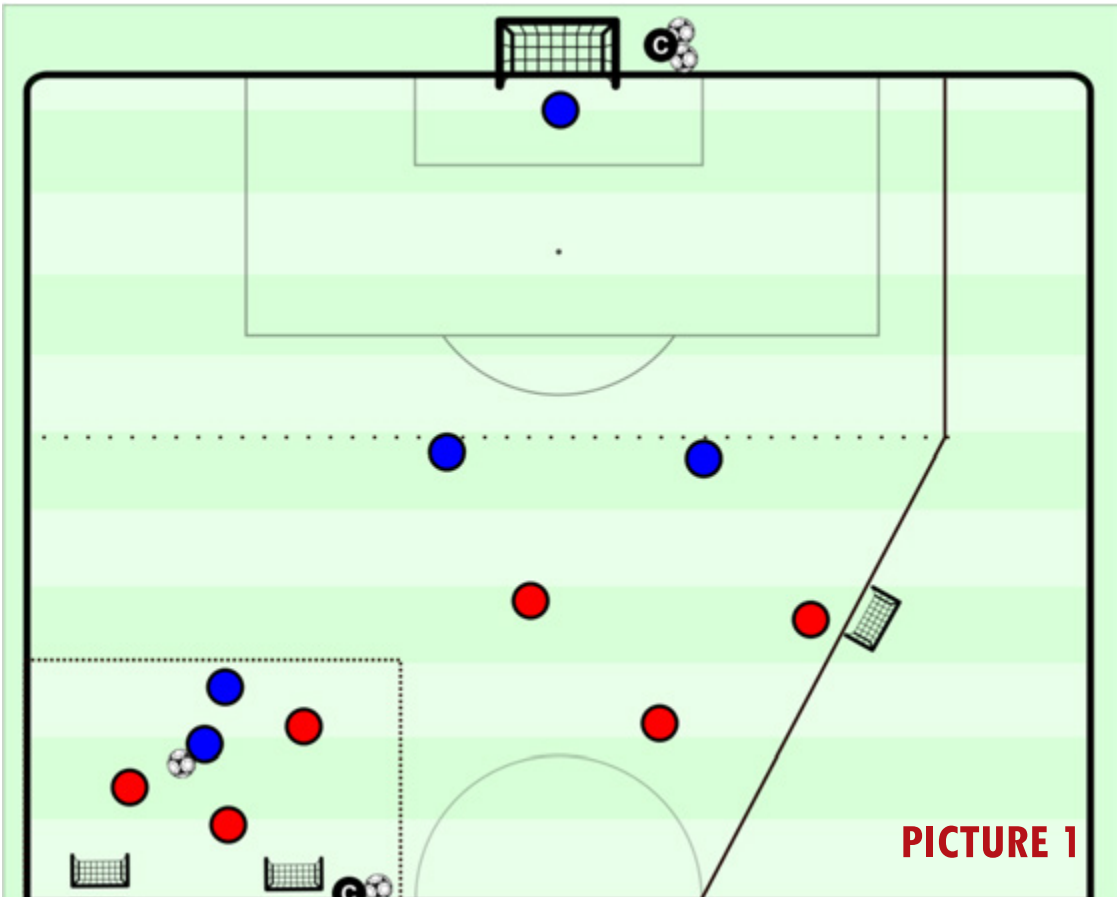
His columns have proved increasingly popular, and have been republished (and translated) worldwide. He has also provided content for one of the world-leading tactics blogs - spielverlagerung.com.

Counterattacking game 2v3 into 6v4

In the last couple of weeks, we were really fortunate to learn from coach Yiannis Tsalatsidis. Coach Yiannis shared some unique insights from coaching in both Europe (most recently) and in Canada across various age groups in both the men’s and women’s game. This week, we will continue with our most recent series of sharing various training practices that have proved useful in our daily work, and may be useful to seek inspiration for your work with your players. As always, the nuances of the practice have to (by definition) vary according to context. However, what may be useful is the base thoughts and considerations that I’m going to attempt to elaborate on below.

One of the trickiest aspects of football to train may be the counterattack. Especially if we are talking about creating a reliable amount of repetition without doing so from a totally artificial game situation. Of course, the best way to do this may just be in large-sided games themselves, where you can manipulate the space (perhaps make it smaller to create more turnovers organically) or to work with uneven-sided games where one team has, for example, 8 outfield players, the other 6, and the one with 6 players always gets the restart. However, there are situations, particularly from a physical loading perspective, where this solution might not be the right one. Also, this situation creates counters from very varied situations, which is great, but also may require some quite in-depth insight from the players in terms of our principles of attacking on the counter.

There may also be a quite specific situation you want to recreate time and again to work on. This can help



PICTURE 1

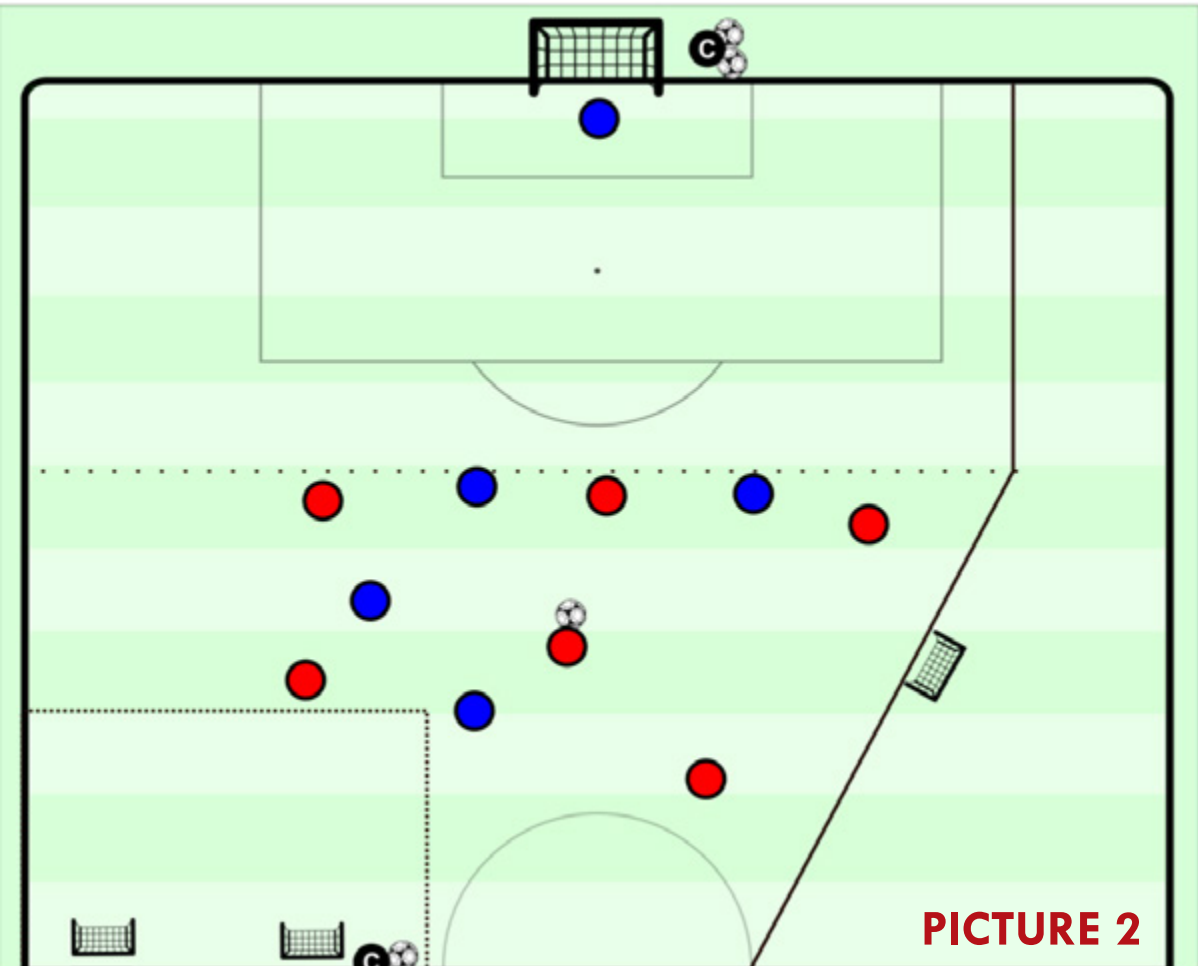
build clarity for the players, or maybe, especially at a professional level, a detail that requires immediate and urgent attention. Situation exercises like the one below may be a good solution then. A couple of years ago, we already wrote about the potential use of these ‘situation’ exercises. However, when starting a practice in a very specific situation, it is of course still noteworthy that the practice, if done with the context of teammates and opposition players, may still be useful for further and broader learning than just to learn that one situation off by heart, so to say. This learning takes place on the level of playing principles, and also learning to play with your teammates and varied opposition pressures and learning to read these better and quicker.

2v3 into 6v4

As we can see in picture 1, this practice starts with an unopposed longer ball from the centre-backs into the initial target field. There we have one player waiting who faces an initial 1v2 in the smaller playing area, which is marked by the dotted lines. As the long ball is played, two further players join the small playing area, creating a 2v3 in favour of the defensive side in this case. The two initial blue attackers now have to solve a 2v3 situation where the ball comes to them in a difficult aerial situation. The chance that these players

may lose the ball in this 2v3 is quite high; however, it is great to practice a bit of under-load attacking as a useful side product in this instance. The idea for the red team is to win the ball in a clean and dynamic way and to play out into the bigger field.

In this moment, the 2v3 turns into a 6v4 in favour of the red team that just won the ball. They



PICTURE 2

now look to attack diagonally towards the big goal in a 6v4 situation. This 6v4 includes the players that just played in the 2v3, who immediately have to switch to playing towards the big goal. The field shape supports a diagonal attack towards the big goal, where we are looking to go from outside to the inside and attack the opposition defenders and goal with maximum speed. Ideally, without the blue players from the 2v3 field managing to recover and thereby get all 4 defenders behind the ball in the second phase of the practice.

There are a couple of key conditions that help create a stable game flow in this practice. The first is that if the ball leaves the field in the initial 2v3 situation, which will happen time and again, a second ball is played in from the coach (marked C), who stands by the small goals. This ensures adequate repetition of the counterattack in the bigger space, regardless of the outcome of the initial 2v3 situation. Also, if you do have 20 outfield players in your training, it can make a lot of sense to play this game as a team competition. In other words, on the one side of the field, Blue gets the initial ball into the 2v3 and red attacks towards the big goal, while on the other side, this is reversed. Here, blue attacks

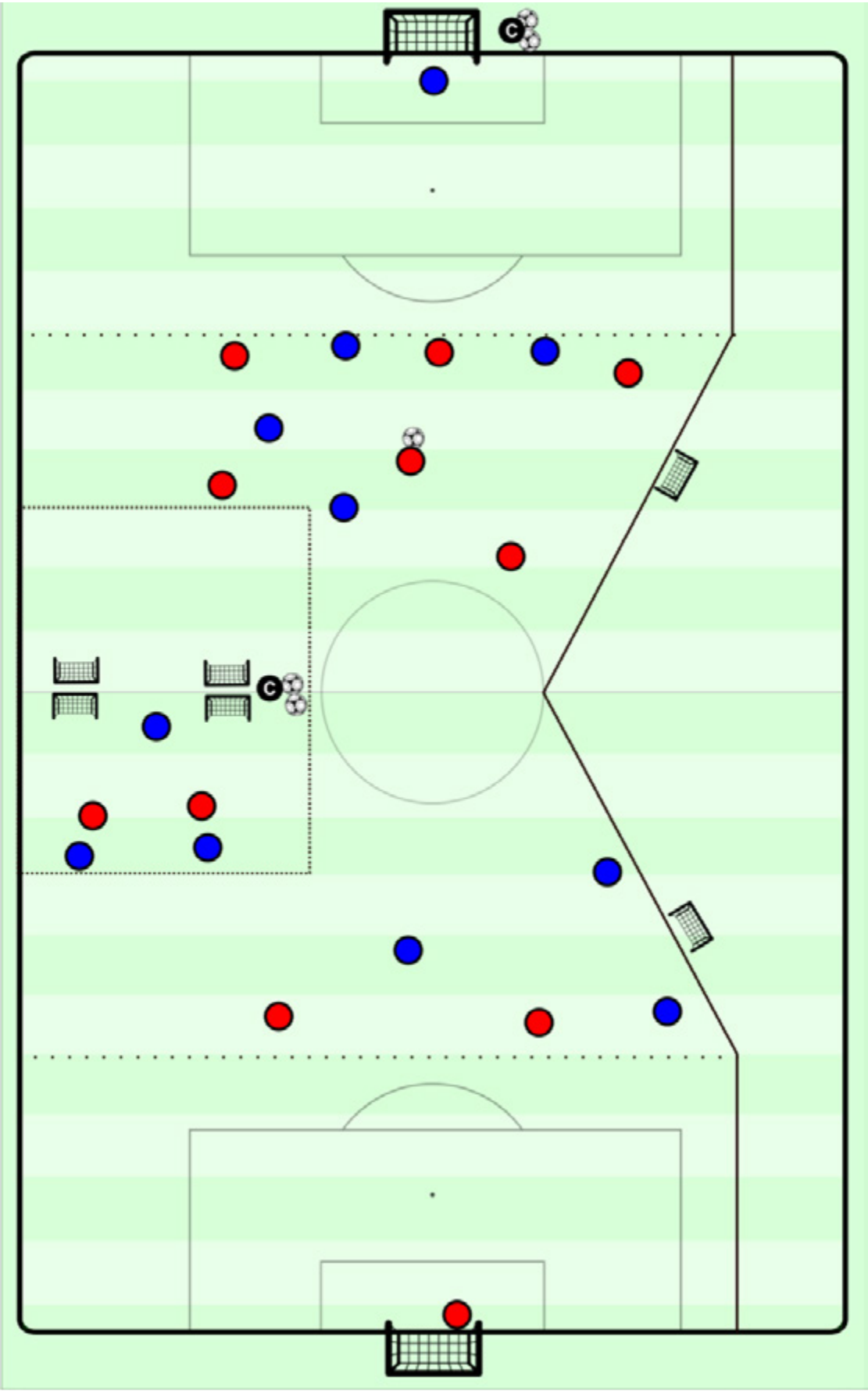
in the 6v4 and red gets the ball played into the 2v3.

Now, as soon as one wave of play is finished on one side of the field, a new wave starts on the other side, and we have a good team competition going. A nice addition to the practice now is that we switch sides between rounds. This ensures that each team gets to counterattack with play starting from both the right and the left side. The dotted line in front of the box is the offside line. In other words, the offside line is applied, like the normal halfway line in a full 11v11 game.

It can be a great idea to use a scoring system for this game. For example, goals where the two players who attack the mini-goals in the under-load situation get rewarded with 2 points for every goal they score. Also, if the other team manage to win the ball cleanly and score in the 6v4, they in turn also get rewarded with 2 points. However, if they score the ball that the coach plays in after the other one went out, then they only get 1 point. Putting an emphasis on winning the ball cleanly in the initial situation. If the defenders win the ball in the 6v4 situation, there is also a further mini goal for them to attack now on the

other side of the field. This puts an emphasis on the 6 players counter-pressing after losing the ball in the counter-attack.

This practice can be great for young players to develop an understanding for playing in larger situations where space is readily available. This oftentimes requires a much different behaviour from them than playing in smaller situations where less space is available. These open situations often require players sprinting and covering large areas of space towards goal in a short time, with and without the ball. This can be learned nicely in this practice. It is of course also possible to play this practice without a complicated scoring system like the one described here. It all depends on what you want to get out of the practice for the players that you work with.



PICTURE 3



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