



FOSTER ON HIS BAFANA CRITICS & BENNI RECORD



BROOS MUST NOT SUFFER BARKER & QUEIROZ FATE



THE DRAWING BOARD WITH MORITZ KOSSMANN & ACE OF THE WEEK

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EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW



LYLE FOSTER
EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW



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TEAM OF THE WEEK
& ACE OF THE WEEK



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CHIEFS REKINDLE TOURE INTEREST?

Kaizer Chiefs have understandably rekindled their interest in Ismaël Toure, who has become a free agent after departing the UAE outfit Baniyas. Amakhosi wanted to sign the Ivorian defender prior to his switch abroad from Stellenbosch at the end of the 2024/25 campaign. Chiefs are said to have already expressed their interest in securing the services of the 27-year-old, who first came to the fore at Marumo Gallants before joining Steve Barker’s team.



ARENDSE LINKED WITH SEKHUKHUNE

Following his recent departure from Siwelele FC, former Bafana Bafana goalkeeper Andre Arendse could be set for a reunion with Eric Tinkler at Sekhukhune United. The 58-year-old, who previously served as assistant coach at SuperSport United, joined Siwelele after the club’s ownership change earlier this year. However, after a disappointing start to the season, Arendse — along with former CEO Stan Matthews and goalkeeper coach Grant Johnson — parted ways with the club. Now, a move to Babina Noko, where he would link up with his former national teammate, appears to be on the cards.



ZIM TALENT ATTRACTS PSL EYES

One of Zimbabwe’s rising stars, Denzel Mapuwa, could be on the move to the PSL in the new year. The Zimbabwe international forward, who was once on assessment at Sporting Lisbon, has starred in the national team under levels before his recent breakthrough in the COSAFA Cup. Sources have confirmed that he could follow his international teammate Thando Ngwenya to the PSL, with three clubs having made contact over his services.



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SUNDOWNS SOAR, PIRATES WITH A MOUNTAIN TO CLIMB

While it's been a week of celebration for Bafana Bafana after sealing their long-awaited return to the FIFA World Cup, it was a far less joyful weekend for South African clubs in CAF intercontinental competitions, where all four sides faced testing away trips in the second preliminary round first legs.

On Saturday, both Kaizer Chiefs and Stellenbosch FC, flying the flag in the CAF Confederation Cup, were left frustrated after grinding out goalless draws on foreign soil.

For Chiefs, the clash against AS Simba in the DR Congo proved to be a gruelling encounter on the tricky artificial surface of TP Mazembe Stadium. Despite creating several clear chances, the Glamour Boys failed to make them count, and will feel they left Lubumbashi with unfinished business.

In Equatorial Guinea, Stellenbosch endured similar frustration against 15 de Agosto, with the match ending 0–0 in conditions that tested both teams' endurance more than their technical skill.

Both sides will now enjoy home advantage in this week's return legs, but must remain vigilant as any score draw would send them crashing out on the away-goals rule.

The shock of the weekend, however, came on Sunday, as Orlando Pirates, last season's CAF Champions League semi-finalists, were handed a humbling 3–0 defeat by St Eloi Lupopo, the reigning DRC champions. The hosts were ruthless, with Wanet Kashala striking early, before Dramane Kambou, and Jean

Benoît Tukumbane scoring late to stun the Buccaneers and leave Abdeslam Ouaddou's men facing a mountain to climb in the return leg in Soweto.

But while Orlando Pirates' hopes of reaching the group stages now hang by a thread, Mamelodi Sundowns once again showed why they are the benchmark of South African club football. The reigning Betway Premiership champions, and last season's CAF Champions League runners-up, put one foot firmly in the group stages with a resounding 5–1 away win over Remo Stars in Nigeria.

It was a statement performance from Miguel Cardoso's side, who not only showcased their attacking flair but also made a little piece of history, becoming the first South African club ever to win a competitive fixture in Nigeria.

From the opening whistle, Sundowns looked a class apart. Tashreeq Matthews broke the deadlock, before Peter Shalulile doubled the lead before half-time. The Brazilians' dominance only grew in the second half, as new Portuguese signing Miguel Reisinho marked his starting XI debut with a goal, Arthur Sales added his name to the scoresheet, and fellow new recruit Tsiki Ntsabeleng rounded off the scoring with a confident finish. For Remo Stars, there was little to celebrate beyond a late consolation from Samson Olasupo.

For Sundowns, the result wasn't just about the scoreline; it was a statement of intent. After coming so close to continental glory last season, the message to Africa is clear: the Brazilians mean business again, and they're coming back for the title.

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‘HOPE FOR THE NEXT GENERATION’

Hugo Broos and Bafana Bafana’s qualification for the FIFA World Cup last week has brought a new energy to South African football and could inspire the next generation says Nkululeko Nkewu.

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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‘Young Kids Are Driven By Trends And Hype’

“Young boys and girls are a demographic that we have to always fight for.

“Their attention and loyalty is captured by social media. It is not a given that

they will support South African football.

“Their TikTok can condition them to love WWE or something way more entertaining and exciting.

“Bafana Bafana qualifying for a World Cup is more meaningful than we can imagine.

“Young kids are driven by trends and hype. The hype of qualifying for a World Cup and the euphoria of the moment gives me hope that at least we have captured the next generation.

“Football is nothing without fans. We need to invest in capturing the next set of fans.

“Bafana Bafana and Hugo Broos, and SAFA have made that easier by sealing our ticket to America.

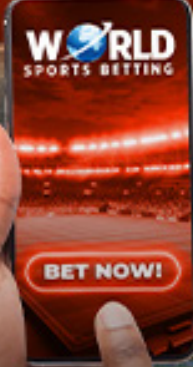
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WHY BROOS MUST GO TO THE WORLD CUP

By Matshelane Mamabolo

The third time has to be the charm for Hugo Broos. The Belgian coach of Bafana Bafana is the third man to lead South Africa's senior national team to qualifying for the FIFA World Cup, and surely he is not going to suffer the same fate as his predecessors.

The silver-haired Broos is now Bafana's longest ever serving coach, having been in charge since 2021, and such has been the squad's progress under his guidance that there's good reason to believe he could well deliver the Africa Cup of Nations [AFCON] title at the next edition in Morocco, having already won us bronze in the previous one.

Bafana's qualification for the global showpiece to be hosted by all of

Canada, Mexico and the United States of America [USA] in June was such that there is hope South Africa could reach the knockout stage for the first time.

The septuagenarian has restored pride in our national team. He has taken Bafana Bafana back to the top echelons of continental football, and logic would suggest that SAFA stick with him until the World Cup, as dictated by the contract they have with him.

Yet in the world of football, where coaches are no more useful than disposable razors and contracts are never worth the paper they are written on, nothing can ever be taken for granted – particularly where SAFA are involved.

Granted, it definitely would be folly of them to fire Broos like they did Clive Barker and Carlos Queiroz. But don't bet on it.

Like his predecessors, Broos has a major tournament to participate in prior to the World Cup, and history suggests a poor showing there could have dire consequences. But then again, we have to hope that SAFA have matured from their bad old 'trigger-happy' years.

Somewhat naïve and definitely easily influenced by general opinion, the custodians of the game locally sent Barker out to pasture following a poor showing by Bafana in their maiden appearance in the FIFA Confederations in December of 1997.

That they'd held European champions the Czech Republic to a draw, lost narrowly to both hosts Saudi Arabia and South American title holders Uruguay, meant nothing to the SAFA suits whose knives had long been out for The Dog. A vicious campaign by some sections of the media – seemingly fuelled by some within SAFA – to have Barker gone had been raging long before the Confederations Cup, and the failure to win a match in Saudi





Arabia provided the perfect ammunition.

Barker was gone before he could even defend his Nations Cup title, with Jomo Sono taking temporary charge of the team at the biennial continental showpiece in Burkina Faso, where Bafana surrendered their championship to Egypt in the final.

Frenchman Philippe Troussier was tasked with leading us to our first World Cup, and, almost to a man, the players who were in the squad speak of how disastrous the camp was and how firing Barker was a huge mistake.

The same fate befell Portuguese Carlos Queiroz, who led Bafana to qualification for the 2002 World Cup but parted ways acrimoniously after the AFCON of the same year in Mali, where South Africa were dumped out in the quarter-final by the hosts. Sono, who had been appointed as a ‘Technical Director’ just before Queiroz’s exit, led the team to South Korea.

Trott Moloto was the assistant coach to Barker back then, and he was also the second in charge to Queiroz. Now a senior member of Mamelodi Sundowns’ technical brain-trust, Moloto has urged SAFA to stand by their man until the end.

“Those were crazy times for South African football. It was almost a trend that SAFA fired coaches without a valid reason. The leadership did not seem to understand the game,” Moloto says. “Clive was one of the best coaches we’ve had, and the players totally got him. But administratively, we were let down by the trigger-happy leadership.”

Moloto would like to believe that there is some maturity in the game’s leadership now.

“I think we have moved quite a distance from the previous SAFA administration.

DE SA - “I JUST HOPE THAT SAFA DO THE RIGHT THING NOW, UNLIKE BEFORE WHEN THEY FIRED US. CARLOS AND I SPEAK ABOUT IT OFTEN AND HE ALWAYS TELLS ME HOW AMAZING IT IS THE WAY THAT DECISION OPENED UP MANY DOORS FOR HIM.”

The current one even tried to bring some positive changes into Bafana. For me, this should be an opportunity for SAFA people to support the coach and the players. Let them get the freedom of preparing for the World Cup without fearing for their jobs.”

The man fondly referred to as Trappattoni is hopeful that sanity will prevail and SAFA will allow Broos to see his project all the way to its rightful conclusion.

“We’ve got a lot of stability under Broos. There are no players retiring or quitting the national team like it was the case in our time. I think the old man has done so much positive for our national team, and there must never be any interference with the coach’s job. Let’s leave everything as it is because stability is the key to the success we’ve been enjoying. I believe Bafana can actually surprise people at the World Cup and get to the Last 16 and even the quarter-final under Broos.”

Prior to the global showpiece, there is the small matter of the AFCON in





Morocco from December to January next year, and Moloto advises that the tournament be seen as a dress rehearsal for the World Cup – nothing more. “Let’s use it as a test of our strength. The results should not matter. Of course, by that I don’t mean we should not take the tournament seriously. But our boys should be given a chance to grow at the Cup of Nations so that they are ready and confident to mix it up with the best of the best at the World Cup.”

The man best suited to explain just why Broos has turned Bafana into the success machine of the year is Helman Mkhalele, who has now qualified for the World Cup as a player and a coach. Ncane was in the 1997 squad coached by Barker and went to France ‘98 as a player.

In 2001, when Queiroz earned South Africa the ticket to Korea/Japan, Mkhalele was still a player, and he was now sitting alongside Broos on the bench as an assistant coach.

“Clive was like a father, telling you straight what he wanted,” Mkhalele recently told iDiski Times.

“Coach Broos is the same. He makes things clear, but he also allows players to express themselves within the team plan.

“When I sit on the bench, I don’t see myself as just Helman,” he also said.

“I represent the legends who came before me – the Jomo Sonos, the Kaizer Motaungs, those who inspired me. I represent the generation I played with and those who didn’t get the chance.

“And I also represent the young players coming through, showing them there is life after football.”

Former Bafana goalkeeper Roger de Sa was part of the technical team that earned South Africa the ticket to the 2002 World Cup with Queiroz in charge and knows only too well the pain of being denied the taste of something you’ve worked hard for.

Along with the Portuguese coach, they’ve since been to the global showpiece on more than one occasion and De Sa would not like the same fate he experienced

MOLOTO - “CLIVE WAS ONE OF THE BEST COACHES WE’VE HAD, AND THE PLAYERS TOTALLY GOT HIM. BUT ADMINISTRATIVELY, WE WERE LET DOWN BY THE TRIGGER-HAPPY LEADERSHIP.”

to befall Broos and Co.

“I am very happy that Bafana qualified, despite them having made it difficult for themselves with those three docked points,” De Sa tells iDiski Times.

“But they’ve been pretty good. I just hope that SAFA do the right thing now, unlike before when they fired us. Carlos and I speak about it often and he always tells me how amazing it is the way that decision opened up many doors for him. You’ll remember he went on to Man[chester] United and Real Madrid plus many national teams.

“I think the current technical team has been outstanding, even from the Cup of Nations, you could see that. I just hope this time around they don’t lose their heads and get ahead of themselves.

“They must keep going the same way and don’t change too much. The World Cup is a totally different beast and with this one having so many teams playing in three massive countries, it will logistically be a nightmare.

“They must just keep it right; keep the staff that’s there because they’ve been fantastic; been consistent and did the right things. The results have proven that because in the end they have comfortably qualified and I certainly hope there’s no interference from anywhere, be it administratively from SAFA or anywhere outside football politically.

“Hugo Broos and his team have been outstanding and taken Bafana from nowhere to once again being top ten in Africa which is where we should be.”





RONZA, APPOLLIS & GOSS SHARE RAW EMOTIONS AFTER WC QUALIFICATION

13 October 2025: MD-1 pre-match press conference in the auditorium of the basement at the Mbombela Stadium, Bafana Bafana captain RONWEN WILLIAMS and head coach Hugo Broos are fielding questions from the media about arguably one of their biggest games of their respective careers. A deciding 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifier match against Rwanda to be played the next day, one of the questions posed to Williams was about the venue, infamously known for a humiliating dance in the AFCON qualifiers in October 2011 where South Africa did not read the rules and thought they had sealed qualification for the 2012 African spectacle after a goalless draw with Sierra Leone in the same city. Fast forward to October 2025, Bafana needed to win their last match against Rwanda and hope for a favourable result in a simultaneous Group C fixture between Nigeria and Benin in Uyo. The Mamelodi Sundowns goal minder was calm with no signs of panic in the press conference despite his team's qualification hanging in the balance. When the question came, he confidently said he believes in fairy tales and that he and teammates might even do the same dance from their seniors 14 years ago to celebrate their imminent qualification to the global event in North America in 2026. Final scores on 14 October 2025 read South Africa 3-0 Rwanda, while in Uyo, Nigeria 4-0 Benin, iDiski Times was there in Mpumalanga, watched and celebrated with Bafana post-match and LETHABO KGANYAGO heard from RICARDO GOSS, OSWIN APPOLLIS and Williams.

WILLIAMS:
“ALL THE THINGS THAT HAPPENED ALONG THE WAY, WE DON'T FORGET.”

Lethabo Kganyago: Ricardo, how are you feeling right now?

Ricardo Goss: Oh my God, no words, unbelievable. I don't want to be negative, I saw many people doubting us, you know, and we knew we had it the way we started. I mean, this new group of players, this new technical team, I think we've been fantastic, we've been playing very well. We've been unfortunate, especially against Zimbabwe, and tonight to get three goals like that, oh my God, unbelievable, and to make it to the World Cup, it's a dream come true for every South African.

LK: Your skipper and fellow goalkeeper Ronwen Williams has always had belief, even before this match, he said it's going to be a fairy tale, he didn't even concede....

RG: Look, after the final whistle, everyone was happy. I was asking, are we sure we've qualified (laughs). I mean, yeah, man, he is a positive



guy. He is honest with the team, his experience we do steal from him, we take a lot from him, and he's a positive guy, that's why he is our skipper. He shows his leadership even on the field of play, and what more can we ask for?

LK: Ossie, well done, a great performance, Man of the Match on such an occasion with two assists and a goal...

Oswin Appollis: We have to give credit to the team. We are going to the World Cup. It's an exciting moment, and thank you to everyone who came out today, and most important, we have to thank God because it was going to be difficult if Benin had won today. So we are happy that we are through. To the coach, thank you for being here with us and to the players, thank you for fighting today to take us to the World Cup.

LK: Skipper, before the match, you said you believe in fairy tales, and we are here today living it...

Ronwen Williams: Amazing, I'm lost for words. I'm so proud and happy for the boys, for the country, for everyone associated with Bafana Bafana. When I said that, you know everything just worked out in our favour. The past result, and like I always tell the boys, we like to make things difficult for ourselves. We don't like things the easy way, and even in camp when the food is not ready or the kit, I just know that's a sign that things are going to be good for us. And I told the guys after the Zim game, 'Don't drop your heads, this thing is happening for a reason'. We enjoy playing with our backs against the wall; that's just how we are as a country. So I knew when that happened, I knew that obviously Nigeria would beat Benin. I'm just

APPOLLIS: "TO THE COACH, THANK YOU FOR BEING HERE WITH US AND TO THE PLAYERS, THANK YOU FOR FIGHTING TODAY TO TAKE US TO THE WORLD CUP."

happy and proud.

LK: Did you guys get a signal about what was happening in Nigeria because at some point we were 2-0 up and they were also 2-0 up that side...

RW: Obviously, the bench got the information. I'm not sure with the crowd because I expected the crowd to [give a signal], but they didn't, but it's part of the game. The main thing was for us to focus on ourselves as well.

LK: What kind of a ride have these qualifiers been?

RW: Oh, amazing, a rollercoaster, extreme highs, some lows as well, but those lows gave us the energy to keep going because all the things that happened along the way we don't forget. That fuelled us to keep going; we had to keep fighting. We know the treatment we got in Rwanda, we said even two years ago that we can't wait for them to come here because of what they put us through, making us play on that field and the place where we stayed. We are the only team that played on the artificial turf. So it's all those things that fuelled us today and gave us that extra energy to keep fighting.

LK: Thank you, Skipper. The whole of South Africa is proud of you guys.



FOSTER ON BAFANA QUALIFICATION, HIS COMMITMENT & BENNI THE GOAT

Bafana Bafana are on their way to the FIFA World Cup finals in the USA, Canada and Mexico next year, and while he missed the Rwanda win through injury, striker LYLE FOSTER has been one of the key players during these qualifications. Foster, along with Thapelo Morena and Oswin Appollis, finished as joint top-scorers for Hugo Broos' team, with two goals each. The Burnley striker has had to listen to a fair amount of criticism from local supporters of late, but having already had to deal with his own personal battle with mental health, the 25-year-old tells iDiski Times' senior writer LORENZ KÖHLER his focus is on what happens on the pitch. South Africa's only footballer in the English Premiership is beyond proud to have earned that World Cup ticket with the team, and hopes to contribute even more in the future...

Lorenz Köhler: Okay, we're here with the man who's at the highest level of club football in England, Lyle Foster. Look, you weren't on the pitch on this special day due to injury, but how do you feel knowing we're going to the 2026 FIFA World Cup?

Lyle Foster: Yoh, I don't.... You know the words aren't coming yet. But I'm beyond proud, man, grateful obviously, to be here with so many boys that I have come through with [the youth ranks] as well, like from the U-20 World Cup, the U-23 squad who went to the Olympics - there's a core group

of us obviously, and there's the senior players like Ronza [Ronwen Williams], Sailor [Khuliso Mudau] as well. I don't know man [what to say] but just, I'm more than grateful, this is the peak of every footballer's career, something we dream of as a child, watching on TV. Probably the biggest sporting event in the world - and to be able to qualify for it, I think on merit... after we lost three points. It just confirms here, what kind of squad we have here, the strength, the mentality!

LK: It wasn't an easy route...

LF: I was speaking to Ronza the other day, and I was saying, 'You know, we South Africans, we don't like things easy, and this is the path we had to take, so more than grateful, humble. We just look forward and continue with so much faith, and we have something big to look forward to in December again, but I think this is the big one we achieved, and now the stress is gone. Now, we can play with so much freedom.

LK: Look, I have to ask you this: there have been times where people have doubted your commitment to this country. How much does this mean for you? How much does it mean to play for Bafana Bafana - for you?

LF: I'm South African...

LK: You're from Noordgesig...



LF: Haha, last night, I saw all the hatred against me after the game against Zimbabwe. I'm instinctive; I did what I did. At the end of the day, what happened, happened. I read something, you must Google it, it's called 'The Man In The Arena.' It's not the critic who counts, it's not the people, it's us that are on the field, that are daring to f\$#k up every day, that are daring to make mistakes, that are daring to sit on the bench, that are daring to fly, to leave our home, to take risks.

LK: And come back...

LF: Yes, and come back every single time to come and play for the country and the people that we love, and all those that talk [and criticise] will talk, they will talk. But if you question my commitment? That's on you! I love being here with my country. I could have easily gone home today. I wanted to stay, to be here with the boys, because I knew this moment was.... [important]. I just... I'm grateful for this; it's God's will to be here, with people I look up to growing up. Like Ronza, for example, a true role model for me since I was young. So yeah, man - I don't think my commitment should be questioned.

LK: Look, it's a special moment, I won't keep you long. My last question for you. You're quite young, 25-years-old, I think...

LF: Yes, I'm 25.

LK: Hopefully another 10 years in this game...

LF: God willing, yes.

**“ALL THOSE
THAT TALK WILL
TALK. BUT IF YOU
QUESTION MY
COMMITMENT?
THAT'S ON YOU!
I LOVE BEING
HERE WITH MY
COUNTRY.”**

LK: Do you genuinely see yourself potentially getting that goal-scoring record of Benni McCarthy — 31 goals — because you have started really well with eight goals already scored?

LF: Benni is the GOAT... lots of love for him.

LK: Records are there to be broken...

LF: One hundred percent, but I can't lie to you, you know, and say I don't think of it, I never thought of it before the skipper mentioned it to me - it's not something I go into every game thinking about, but if it happens, it happens. I have started really well, thank God for that. And God Willing, if it happens, it happens. I won't sit here and say that it's not something I don't want to achieve. Everyone wants to achieve things. I have so much respect for Benni, but I'd like to follow in his footsteps as well.

LK: Thank you so much. Enjoy the celebrations!

LAFITTE ON VICTORIES OVER ORLANDO PIRATES & SUNDOWNS

At the age of 28, ALEXANDRE LAFITTE, is steady and confident in his capabilities rather than in overthinking his age. Lafitte was named the coach of Marumo Gallants at the beginning of the current season, coming off a successful and historic stint at Stade d'Abidjan in the Ivory Coast the previous term. The Frenchman helped Abidjan win their first domestic league title in 56 years. He is seemingly enjoying a good start in the Betway Premiership with Bahlabane ba Ntwa, who are currently sitting in 10th position on the log with 13 points from nine matches, while they have caused upsets to Orlando Pirates and Kaizer Chiefs already. Gallants are also through to the quarter-finals of the Carling Knockout Cup, having eliminated Mamelodi Sundowns in the first round of the league cup. Lafitte speaks to iDiski Times journalist LETHABO KGANYAGO in this edition about his inspiration behind coming to coach in Africa, not letting his age come in between the job and his capabilities, the early upsets to the big three in the South African league, his ambitions with Gallants and the coaches that have inspired him, among other things.

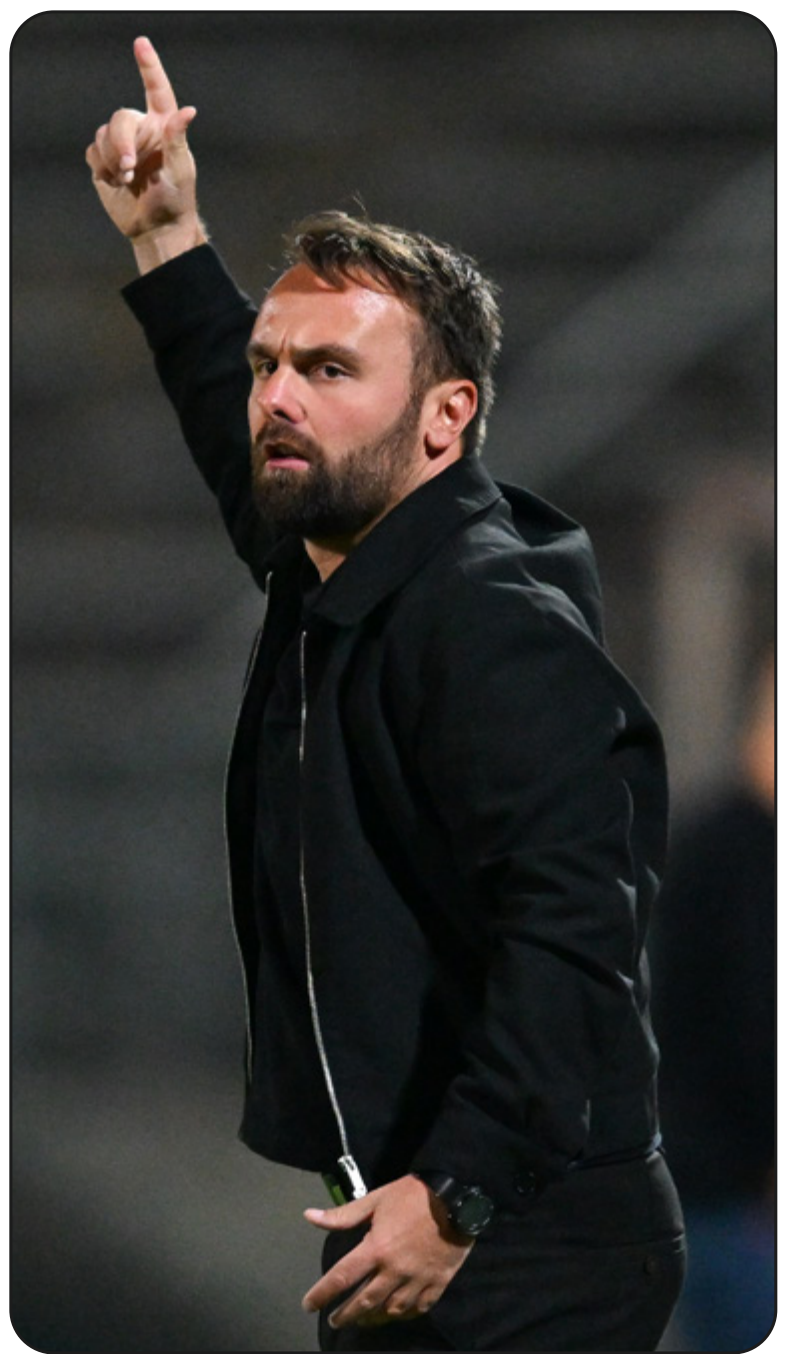
Lethabo Kganyago: Coach, we appreciate you speaking to us. Firstly, how are you finding your time in South Africa?

Alexandre Lafitte: It's very good and honestly I'm very happy because it's a new country for me and for my wife, and honestly I love this country, it's very developing and very nice. The people of South Africa are very, very nice. So, yeah, for the moment, I'm happy to be here. I'm happy to live in Bloemfontein. It's a very nice city, it's good.

LK: And how are you finding the league so far, coach?

AL: For me, the league is very developing. For me, it's the best league in Africa that has structures for everyone to manage the development. The league is very professional, and for that, I like this, and the level is interesting. Honestly, we have a good team. And in this league, all teams can win [against] all teams. It's very interesting, I'm very happy to work in this league. I think the competitiveness is strong. For me, it is the second, second-best championship in Africa, and when you see the result last season in the [CAF] Champions League, two teams from here played in the semi-final. So yeah, I think it's interesting and the players are interesting. It is not the same. Culture is not the same thing as Europe, because young players here start at 23, 22. They don't start very young, and players play after 30 years. So it's different, but honestly, we have a lot of teams, good players and also good coaches, so I think it's an interesting league.

LK: Please tell us a little bit about your journey of coming to Africa. How did that come about for you?



AL: For me, it's an opportunity because I am the youngest head coach and you know it's difficult, notably in France, to pass the diploma and to have the opportunity to work. But if you have a good result in Africa, and you can have a good performance if possible, you can work in Europe. And that for me is a good opportunity. When I went to the Ivory Coast, for me it was a fantastic opportunity to win the league, to play the Champions League, and now I'm very happy, because I work in the best championship in Africa.

LK: And for you to join Marumo Gallants, what attracted you to them?

AL: I like a challenge, and for me, to work in South Africa it's a good opportunity to develop my football and my career. And Marumo is an opportunity because it is a young club and open to structure, to organisation. For that, I like the challenge because when you work in a team that has difficult results, if you work very good, it's possible to change the position for the club, change to have a better result. And me, I like change, challenges, for that it is a fantastic opportunity.

LK: And coach, you were speaking about being the youngest coach in the league, how do you handle that because, like you said, there's older players, even in your team, there are players that are older than you.

AL: Well, for me it's not a problem. You know, when you are a head coach notably the players respect you because you decide. But the most important thing is that the players feel you can help them, you can help the team to improve, and after communication, it's important to understand what their personality is, who they are and how you can adapt.



And for me, players don't remember the age, they just work and follow the coach because they think it's possible to win with you.

LK: You have done fairly well since your arrival. I mean, among your results, you won three points against Pirates, got a point against Chiefs, and you eliminated Sundowns from the Carling Cup. How did that feel for you, knowing these are the three top teams here, and you have caused early upsets to them?

AL: Yes, that is reality. I think when you play the best team, it is very interesting, and for me, it's easy to analyse because when you play these teams, you know they have a system and organisation to attack in different positions, and defend different things, and you can adapt your game plan in relation to that. And me, I like this because I like the tactics and I like to improve and to challenge my players to find a solution to win against these teams. And the second thing, when you play these teams, the motivation increases for the players. I think my job is to help my team to perform against these teams because, you know, it is difficult when you play very strong players, very strong teams. And for that, I like to play against these teams.

LK: Which would you say was the sweetest result against these three teams?

AL: I think the victory against Pirates was very incredible because you score in the last minute and you have played a very, very good game. But after Sundowns' elimination, I was happy because during the week, we had worked on the game plan. I spoke with players that it's possible to go to penalties and to win against Sundowns in penalties. For that, I was very happy after the performance also.

LK: Coach, how far do you think your team can go in the cup?

AL: You know, me, my job is to win the game, to win titles, but for the moment, it is not a priority. For the moment it is important to win the future games in the championship, and after obtaining the qualification against Stellenbosch, after it's important to take it step by step to obtain qualification and see how it can be possible.

LK: In the league, you're not very far from the top eight. Do you believe that the team has the quality to be in the top half or even do better and challenge for higher positions in the championship?

AL: I think for the moment we have the possibility to win all games, but we need to improve the whole thing for my team. I'm happy because the new recruits are here, and now we can improve this team. But for the moment, it is important that in December/January, we are in the top eight. If you are in the top eight in January and if you continue to improve the team, it is possible to have other ambitions. It is important to take it step by step. In



“FOR ME, IT IS SECOND, SECOND-BEST CHAMPIONSHIP IN AFRICA.”

my last experience, I took a bad team and then finished in the Champions League position, and I won the title. I know how possible it is to finish in the top four or three, but for the moment, it is not possible to speak about that.

LK: Coach, I also just wanted to touch on your time in the Ivory Coast. What did you make of the talent there?

AL: In general, I think the players in the Ivory Coast are good, very good players technically and athletic. They like to run to attack to defend, and the first stage technically they are very good, because they played a lot of time in the street. And for that, a lot of players after one year go to Europe, and you see in France, in Ligue 1, Ivory Coast have a lot of players in the league. And in Europe, in the world, we have a lot of Ivory Coast players because the national team has a very, very good quality and they can play outside in other countries. They have a very good mindset.

LK: What do you think is the difference between the Champions League teams from South Africa and the ones in the Ivory Coast?

AL: It's different, but when Asec Mimosas played Champions League, it was a very strong team because they have a lot of budget. But honestly, in South Africa, the teams that play Champions League can win the Champions League and in Ivory Coast, the teams play Champions League just to obtain qualification for the quarter-final. Yes, it's not the same objective because we don't have the same budget, honestly.

LK: What did you think was the impact



of Ivory Coast winning the AFCON on locally-based players?

AL: Honestly, all the stadiums now in Ivory Coast are very fantastic. Honestly, the stadiums are better in South Africa. The quality of the pitches is very good. And, yeah, it's a good projector for that, for the facility. The championship improved, but it's not the same mindset because the country is not developed as in South Africa.

LK: Who have been the inspirational coaches that you have looked up to?

AL: When I was younger, it was the time of [Pep] Guardiola and [Jose] Mourinho, and for me, they were my inspiration. But after I was inspired by [Jürgen] Klopp, [Carlo] Ancelotti, [Marcelo] Bielsa. I like collaborative management. It is important to build a very strong team, develop the feeling of the same objective, with all the people and all the players feeling they can play, can have the same value. I like to work like this and sometimes I like to build the team with good quality, very tactical, improve and notably manage the ball control opponent. I like to have possession, I like the counter press. So I like the management of Ancelotti, but I like how Guardiola plays, for example, and the intensity of Klopp.

LK: And in Africa, has there been anybody who has inspired?



“IN MY LAST EXPERIENCE, I TOOK A BAD TEAM AND THEN FINISHED IN THE CHAMPIONS LEAGUE POSITION, AND I WON THE TITLE.”

AL: The coach of Morocco [Walid Regragui]. I like the guy; he's inspirational because he played a very strong competitive team at the World Cup.

LK: Thank you, coach.



FIXTURES

MAFORI MPHAHLELE STADIUM

SATURDAY 25 OCTOBER



TS GALAXY FC
VS
MAMELODI SUNDOWNS
10:00





POLOKWANE FC
VS
ORLANDO PIRATES
12:30



SUNDAY 26 OCTOBER



SEKHUKHUNE UNITED
VS
SIWELELE FC
10:00





MAGESI FC
VS
KAIZER CHIEFS
12:30



#ASIDLALI #SIVUTHAMANJE

WATCH LIVE ON  202  209



PLAYERS WHO LOST THEIR TICKETS AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

As the cycle of FIFA World Cup qualifiers draws to a close and the CAF Africa Cup of Nations finals loom large on the horizon, one debate continues to echo through South African football circles — the perennial question of Bafana Bafana selection. Who gets the call-up, who doesn't, and why? It's a conversation as old as the team itself, and one that seems to intensify with every squad announcement.

In this week's Focus Feature, we take a closer look at six players who, for one reason or another, never quite got their fair shot in national colours, or perhaps didn't seize the moment when it came. We explore when the door closed on them, and whether, in football's unpredictable theatre, it might yet creak open again.

History reminds us that opportunity in football often comes late, and not always in the way one expects. Themba Zwane's story stands out as a recent example. When Hugo Broos initially overlooked him, it sparked outrage among fans and pundits alike. Yet, it's worth remembering that by the time Zwane was 32, he had earned just 28 caps, a surprisingly modest tally for a player of his quality. His journey, a tale of patience, persistence, and a touch of redemption, symbolises the late-bloomer path so many South African players seemed to follow.

Over the last decade, there have been plenty of other talents who hovered around the national team, flickering briefly before fading, or perhaps still waiting for redemption. These are just six of many who have suffered similar circumstances.

Bradley Grobler

While there weren't too many murmurs about Bradley Grobler when Bafana Bafana were scoring freely, the chorus grew deafening after that goalless draw in the FIFA World Cup qualifiers against Zimbabwe. Suddenly, the cries came: "Why is Broos ignoring Grobler?"; "How can they choose Foster ahead of Bradley?" and so on. Heads exploded when Broos called up Ashley Cupido to replace Foster, even though the Stellenbosch striker had scored for the Belgian coach in his previous call-up.

But there are several reasons why the 37-year-old isn't part of the current equation. Let's start with the obvious elephant in the room. He's 37. Every time someone asks, "Where is Bradley Grobler?", my response is, "Where was Bradley Grobler?"

Now, don't get me wrong. I've always rated 'Sniper'. At his sharpest, he's been as clinical as any South African striker of his generation. But I've also always felt he underachieved. This is his 19th season in professional football, yet he's only reached double figures in league goals five times.



That’s a modest return for a player of his technical ability and experience. Unfortunately, it was also an injury-hampered career, which is now about him being well-managed with kid gloves to prevent any breakdowns.

He’s had his moments in the national jersey. Who can forget his scoring debut against Zimbabwe back in 2011? But he never quite kicked on from there. Fifteen years later, his international résumé stands at just 12 caps and two goals. It’s a story of what might have been more than what was. His last cap came in 2019 under Molefi Ntseki.

And while it’s true that other countries sometimes call up players in their late thirties, the comparison doesn’t quite hold. Those veterans (think of Luka Modrić, Olivier Giroud, or Thiago Silva) have been part of their national setups for over a decade. They bring continuity, leadership, and familiarity. Grobler, in contrast, would be reintroducing himself to a team that’s evolved without him, and at the same time, would he need that team to treat him with kid gloves like his club coaches do to maintain his fitness?

That’s not to say he wouldn’t add value in a pinch, if injuries struck, Grobler’s experience could still count. But to suggest he should be leading the line ahead of the likes of England-based Lyle Foster or Iqraam Rayners, arguably the most consistent local forward in recent years, feels more emotional than logical.

In an alternate universe, there’s a Bradley Grobler with 100 caps, a national hero whose goals fired Bafana to tournaments gone by. He’s probably the PSL’s record goalscorer by some margin. But in this one, the time for that chapter has passed. Picking him now would be more of a short-term patch job than a long-term solution to South Africa’s frontline.

Thembinkosi Lorch

When Thembinkosi Lorch slotted home that unforgettable winner against Egypt in the 2019 Africa Cup of Nations round of 16, it felt like the dawn of something special. In that moment, South Africa dared to believe they had found their next big star, a match-winner with flair, confidence, and the composure to deliver on the biggest stage.

But football, as ever, has a cruel way of twisting fairytales. The now 32-year-old has only played four more games for Bafana Bafana since that famous night (just one of those under Hugo Broos), and his international record remains frozen at nine caps and that single, glittering goal.

For Lorch, the decline was as much about what happened off the field as on it. His legal troubles cast a long and immovable shadow, turning “Nyoso” from a fan favourite into a divisive figure.

Once the heartbeat of Orlando Pirates, adored for his quick feet and electric energy, Lorch’s move to Mamelodi Sundowns was meant to reignite his career. Instead, it flickered briefly and faded fast, especially after Rulani Mokwena, the coach who believed in him, left Chloorkop.

A move to Morocco then offered something of a redemption arc. Mokwena, now at Wydad AC, brought him in on loan, and Lorch seized the opportunity with both hands. While Mokwena left, at the FIFA Club World Cup, Lorch rolled back the years, sharp, creative, and decisive, reminding everyone of the raw ability that once had fans singing his name. Wydad wasted no time in turning his loan into a permanent deal, and he’s continued to deliver in the Botola Pro, earning respect from new supporters in North Africa.

Yet, even as he finds form abroad, the prospect of a Bafana return feels remote. The national team has evolved, and Lorch’s past remains an unshakable weight. His conviction for domestic assault in 2023 remains a scar that neither time nor talent can easily heal. While he continues to play professionally, his name still sparks debate, not just admiration, among South African fans.

Can redemption ever truly erase wrongdoing? Should brilliance on the pitch outweigh the moral cost off it? Those are questions that hang over Lorch’s legacy.

The door to Bafana isn’t bolted shut; football is full of second chances, but under the current leadership and the cultural tone Broos has set, it’s hard to see it swinging open again. Lorch remains a reminder of both what South African football gained that night in Cairo, and what it lost in the years that followed.



Monnapule Saleng

There were once lofty expectations resting on the shoulders of Monnapule Saleng, the speedy, sharp-shooting winger whose rise at Orlando Pirates promised a new star for both club and country. For a while, it all seemed to be coming together: dazzling displays down the flank, and that fearless energy that had fans believing Bafana had found their next great wide threat.

But the spark dimmed almost as quickly as it had caught fire. While Saleng has earned 13 Bafana caps, the truth is that only a handful came under Hugo Broos, and most were in the less glamorous settings of the COSAFA Cup and CHAN competitions.

His slide at Orlando Pirates was as abrupt as it was disappointing. Once a crowd favourite, Saleng fell out of favour amid whispers of disciplinary issues and questions about his focus. It was a harsh reminder that talent alone isn't enough at the elite level, professionalism and consistency matter just as much. Now, finding himself on loan at Orbit College, far from the glare of Soweto's bright lights, Saleng is in a footballing wilderness few expected him to wander into so soon.

Realistically, his Bafana prospects under Broos look slim. The Belgian is known for his uncompromising approach to discipline and unity, and that rarely bodes well for

players who have strayed from the path. Yet, football loves a redemption story, and if Saleng needs any inspiration, he needs only look at Sipho Mbule, another gifted player once written off, now clawing his way back into the national fold with renewed purpose and maturity.

Saleng's pace and flair remain undeniable. The question now is whether he can rediscover the hunger and discipline to match his ability. If he does, his comeback could still be one of South African football's more satisfying chapters. But for the moment, it feels like a promise unfulfilled, a reminder of how quickly stardom can slip away when the focus shifts from the pitch.

Rivaldo Coetzee

It almost defies belief that Rivaldo Coetzee, still only 28 years old, finds himself without a club and with just a single Bafana Bafana cap to his name over the past eight years. For a player once hailed as the future of South African football, it feels like a story of brilliance blunted by misfortune.

When Coetzee burst onto the scene as a teenager at Ajax Cape Town, his calmness, intelligence, and maturity beyond his years immediately set him apart. He wasn't just a promising youngster, he was a prodigy. At 16, he had already made his international debut, becoming one of the youngest players ever to wear the Bafana shirt. For a time, he was an automatic pick under Shakes Mashaba, the foundation on which a new generation was meant to be built.

But football can be cruel, and Coetzee's journey became a cautionary tale of talent undone by the body's betrayal. A rare and bizarre foot injury began what would become a near-decade-long battle for fitness. The timing couldn't have been worse. Just as a move to Scottish giants Celtic was being finalised, the transfer collapsed after the club's medical team failed him on inspection.

He would instead join Mamelodi Sundowns, where his technical ability and versatility, seamlessly shifting from centre-back to deep-lying playmaker, earned admiration. Yet, even at Chloorkop, his story was defined more by absences than appearances. Injuries continually interrupted any rhythm he managed to build, and despite being part of several trophy-winning squads, Coetzee rarely enjoyed a sustained run in the team.

Since his last national team appearance back in 2017, he's managed just one Bafana cap, under Molefi Ntseki in 2021, a painful statistic for someone once tipped to anchor the defence for a decade.

Now, at 28, Coetzee's future hangs in the balance. Free of contract and still young enough to script a comeback, he faces a crossroads that could define whether he becomes one of South Africa's greatest "what ifs" or writes a late-career revival story to rival any.

For now, though, Rivaldo Coetzee remains a haunting reminder of football's fragility, of how even the brightest talents can be dimmed not by lack of will, but by the



cruel twist of fate.

Kermit Erasmus

For a player who once seemed destined to lead South Africa's forward line for years, Kermit Erasmus' international record reads like a riddle. Ten years in the Bafana Bafana setup, yet just 20 caps and two goals – numbers that feel strangely modest for a footballer of such audacious talent. For Erasmus, it's a story that must sting, because few players of his generation possessed his blend of pace, flair, and imagination.

From the moment he burst onto the scene as a teenager, Erasmus carried the aura of a natural, the kind of player who could make things happen out of nothing, whose every touch hinted at possibility. His sharp movement, low centre of gravity, and eye for the spectacular made him a nightmare for defenders and a delight for spectators. But somewhere between potential and production, the stars never fully aligned.

His club career mirrored his national team journey, flashes of brilliance in between long stretches of frustration. Things never quite worked out for him abroad. And whether at SuperSport, Pirates, City or Sundowns, Erasmus was often the spark but rarely the centrepiece. And for Bafana, timing seemed forever his enemy. When he was flying at club level, he was overlooked. When he was finally called up, his form had dipped. Too often, he was used off the bench, expected to conjure magic in limited minutes, a role that rarely rewards creativity or rhythm.

Yet there was never any doubt about his quality. Coaches admired him, teammates trusted him, but the consistency and continuity that turn talent into legacy always eluded him. Injuries played their part too, robbing him of key windows to cement his place just as momentum seemed to build.

Now, looking back, Erasmus' Bafana career feels like one of South African football's great "what-ifs", a case study in how timing, circumstance, and selection can shape a narrative just as much as talent. At his best, Romeo was pure electricity, the kind of player who could lift a crowd and change a game with one swing of his boot. But history will remember not the player he was, but the one he could have been, a reminder that in football, potential without fortune can be a cruel combination.

Kamohelo Mokotjo

For a player of Kamohelo Mokotjo's pedigree, 23 caps for South Africa feels like an incomplete sentence. Another of the nation's most polished exports, Mokotjo's journey took him across continents, from SuperSport United's academy to the bright lights of the Netherlands and England, where he quietly carved out a reputation as a deep-lying playmaker of rare intelligence and composure.

At his peak, he was the kind of midfielder every coach dreams of: disciplined, tactically astute, with a passing range that could control the rhythm of an entire match. Yet, ironically, that very calmness,

that measured, methodical approach, often seemed to work against him in a Bafana Bafana setup that preferred a more physical, high-tempo style. While his European managers built systems around his strengths, his national team coaches often struggled to find him a home on the pitch.

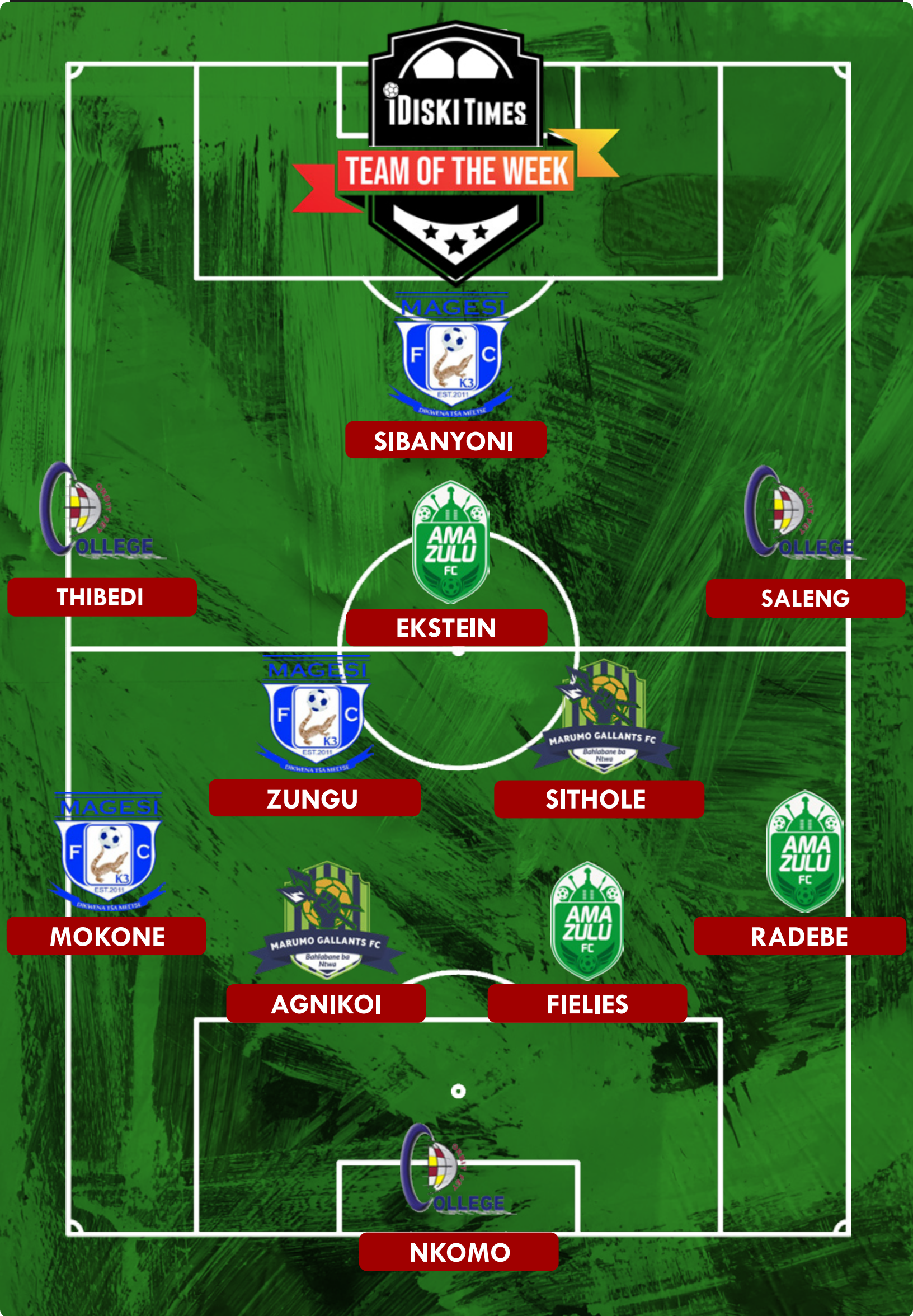
Mokotjo's omission from squads was never due to a lack of talent; it was a matter of fit. Whether under Shakes Mashaba, Stuart Baxter, he always seemed slightly out of sync with the rhythm of the team, the right player in the wrong orchestra. Even when he did get his chance, his contributions were subtle rather than spectacular, and in a football culture that often celebrates the flamboyant over the functional, subtlety rarely wins headlines.

By the time he last pulled on the Bafana jersey in 2019, Mokotjo was entering what should have been his prime years. While he came back to South Africa and showed his class at Sekhukhune United, it still felt like he didn't quite fit into the fabric of the local game.

Now in his thirties, Mokotjo remains a symbol of South Africa's complicated relationship with its exports, a reminder that sometimes our most refined talents shine brightest outside our borders. And perhaps, when he looks back on his career, he too will wonder how different things might have been if the stars, and the systems, had aligned.



IDISKI TEAM OF THE WEEK - PREMIERSHIP 17-19 OCTOBER



ACE OF THE WEEK:
HUGO BROOS

Who else could claim our iDiski Times Ace of the Week title than Bafana Bafana coach Hugo Broos? There's something special about witnessing a promise fulfilled, and Broos, through every storm and setback, has done exactly what he said he would, and the Belgian tactician has steered South Africa back to the biggest stage, the FIFA World Cup in Canada, Mexico and the USA. Broos joins an elite club: only the third coach in Bafana history to achieve qualification, and the first in 23 long years to bring that dream to life. For a man who himself played for Belgium at the 1986 World Cup in the USA, there's poetic symmetry in this achievement. Nearly four decades later, he'll return to American soil, this time as the architect of a new South African story. Hugo Broos promised progress. What he delivered was history.



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: Thabiso Makhetha

This week, we once again have the pleasure of speaking to an international expert. This time it's our very own Thabiso Makhetha. I first met Coach Makhetha when playing against his team in the Bayhill tournament in Cape Town in 2017. At that time, he was coaching the U19S of AmaZulu. Since then, he has completed a remarkable journey which has seen him work in the United States, the Motsepe Foundation Championship and also most recently in Estonia with FC Nõmme United. We speak to Thabiso on his journey so far, what is next, as well as the technical side of the game.

Thabiso, thank you for your time. On the surface, your journey so far seems like a remarkable one that has taken you across the globe. Can you please tell us a little bit more about yourself?

TM: Thanks, Moritz, and thank you for this platform. I've been a fan of your segment, so it's an honour to contribute.

My journey in football has truly been one of learning, growth, and adaptation across different continents and levels of the game. At times, even I have been surprised by where opportunities have presented themselves. My football development was shaped by two major institutions — high school and club football. I attended Westville Boys' High School, where I played for and eventually captained the school's first team, which has produced players such as Rheece Evans, Neil Boshoff, and George Koumantarikis. At club level, I played for Westville United Football Academy (WUFA), which was coached at the time by two SAFA Pro Licensed coaches, Sheldon Roux and Steven Bezuidenhout. As a young player, I didn't fully appreciate how fortunate I was to have such a strong foundation, but in hindsight, it played a pivotal role in shaping my football journey. At WUFA, I also developed alongside future PSL players such as Kwanda Mngonyama, Abel Mabaso, and Jethren Barr.

My elite coaching journey began at AmaZulu F.C., where I spent four years in a dynamic role that included heading the U19 team, assisting the reserve teams (MDC and ABC Motsepe), and leading the academy partnership that was later developed with Glenwood High School. Although I thoroughly enjoyed my time at AmaZulu, I sensed that it was a place where I could easily spend 10 years in my comfort zone. Coaching top youth sides with future professionals was rewarding, but I knew youth football alone wouldn't satisfy my ambition. Without a professional playing career behind my name, I realised I needed to pursue knowledge and qualifications that would help me stand out and eventually make the leap to the professional level.

This drive led me to seek coaching courses and seminars outside South Africa. While attending a seminar in the United States, I was approached by the New Orleans Jesters, a semi-professional club based in Louisiana, about joining their technical team. After two successful years working as an assistant coach in the NPSL, I discovered a four-month coaching program in Barcelona, Spain — the MBP School of Coaches' Master in High Performance Football. After careful consideration, I decided this qualification would give me the chance to study among elite coaches from around the world and immerse myself in one of football's most dominant methodologies. I also had a one season stint in the NFD working as an analyst for



uThongathi FC before one of my colleagues from the MBP course, Slawomir Cisakowski, offered me an opportunity to join him as an assistant coach in the Lithuanian Second Division. We successfully won promotion, but due to financial issues at the club, we moved on and joined Nõmme United in the Estonian Second Division, where we are currently competing for promotion again. We are first on the log, four points away from guaranteeing a second consecutive promotion as a coaching team. The past ten years of my coaching journey reflect a young, ambitious coach in constant pursuit of improvement, continuously learning, and fortunate to find opportunities aligned with his goals.

Q: The step to Europe is one that many South African players and coaches look to make. With your practical perspective, what advice do you have for those who are looking to make the step into the professional game on this continent?

TM: Europe has the highest standard of football in the world, and players from across the globe aspire to play here. The smaller leagues, though less financially lucrative, often serve as gateway leagues to the bigger competitions in the top five countries, creating an exceptionally competitive environment. The quality of coaching, supported by extensive access to information and structured development programs, has produced a large pool of highly capable coaches. For any coach aspiring to make the transition from Africa to Europe, the key is to gain as much practical experience and knowledge as possible. It's also essential to obtain UEFA coaching licenses; while they may not fully capture the depth of understanding required, they are mandatory qualifications for working in European football.

Although it is rare to see coaches moving from Africa to Europe, and not the other way around, the good news is that in today's era, information is more accessible than ever before. The barriers that once existed are lower now, giving bright, hardworking, and educated coaches a genuine chance to break through. Tools for analysis and research are easily available and in fact the future will be championed by coaches who know how to optimise the correct information and not be influenced by all the information.

Q: From a coaching perspective, what type of football do you like to play, and what are some of the key principles within this style?

TM: Football will always be a human game,

and my favourite part of coaching is the daily interaction with people. I enjoy getting to know each individual’s strengths and weaknesses, both on and off the field, and using that understanding to shape the team’s playing style and philosophy. Convincing the collective to become one is at the heart of my approach. My goal is to create an environment and a style of play that every member of the team can take pride in and truly own. In recent years, my philosophy has evolved toward a relational approach to football — one that values connection over position and interaction over rigid structure. I’ve been particularly inspired by coaches such as Fernando Diniz in Brazil and Rulani Mokwena in Algeria, as well as several European coaches who embrace a fluid, collective, and expressive style of play.

When analysing the attacking phase of the game, I believe that effective play emerges from the fluid relationships and non-verbal communication between players. Attacking football, for me, is about synergy and spontaneity — creating patterns not through strict systems, but through shared understanding and collective rhythm. In the defensive phase, my philosophy is built on high pressure, high intensity, and high tempo. I believe in an aggressive, proactive approach that seeks to disrupt the opponent’s rhythm and regain possession as quickly as possible. Combining this with my relational, connection-based attacking principles creates a style that balances unpredictability in attack with controlled aggression in defence — a team capable of maintaining possession, pressing with purpose, and transitioning with speed and intent.

1. Positional Fluidity Through Connection
- Maintain positional structure as a reference, not a restriction.
 - Encourage intelligent rotation and interchanges based on ball movement and teammate positioning.

2. Non-Verbal Communication and Collective Rhythm
- Promote awareness and anticipation through scanning, body orientation, and shared visual cues.
 - Build attacking rhythm through tempo variation — pausing to draw pressure, then accelerating into open space.

3. Aggressive High Press

- Initiate pressing high up the pitch with clear triggers such as a poor touch, backward pass, or closed body shape.
- Compact the team vertically and horizontally to close central channels and force play wide.
- Ensure the nearest players engage while the second and third lines compress space for interceptions and recovery.

4. Counter-Pressing on Loss

- React immediately upon losing possession; nearest players engage to delay or recover.
- Maintain compact team shape to reduce vulnerability in transition.
- Aim to regain possession within three to five seconds or force the opponent into a clearance.

5. Fast and Purposeful Transitions

- Upon recovery, seek immediate vertical progression through direct passes or third-man combinations.
- Attack disorganised defences quickly with forward runners and diagonal support.

Q: Please share one of your favourite training practices that readers can adopt and adapt for their context.

Practice Name: 5v4+1 Possession and Transition Drill

Objective:
Improve possession under pressure.
Develop support play between and behind lines.
Enhance both transitions from defense to attack and vice versa

Setup:
Area: Use a rectangular area divided into two zones.
Players: 5 vs 5. When your team is pressing one player must remain in the opposite side of the pitch
Equipment: Cones to mark areas, mini-goals or small target goals.

- Instructions:**
1. Team of 5 maintains possession in their zone.
 2. They must avoid being pressed into one side of the area, moving the ball and supporting each other between lines.
 3. The pressing team of 4 tries to win the ball and transition to the attacking area. Through a pass to their player who is in the other side of the pitch or via dribbling.
 4. Attackers in the advanced position can lay off the ball to supporting teammates to try and score in mini-goals.
 5. Once a team scores in the mini-goals, the game restarts with the scoring team now maintaining possession, while the other team presses with four players.



TIME	4x2' x 2'R
DESCRIPTION	RONDO 5v4+1
Split pitch into 2 equal areas Do not organise team in positions. Must be fluid in movement and roles.	
Red team gets a point every time they connect for 6 passes. When Blue wins possession they must attempt to escape the first area with a pass to their advanced player or dribble to the 2nd area. After they have entered the 2nd area they must score in the mini goals to receive a point or opt to maintain possession for 6 passes	
DIMENSIONS	
COACHING POINTS	
Transition - 1st pass Forward - Progressive runs attacking space - Counter Press to prevent Transition - Rest defence positions in possession	
Attack - Supporting runs towards player in possession - Co ordinate with team to provide different options - Change point of Attack or be pressed into a corner	
Defend - Press and cover - Make opposition play predictable (Body shape)	



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