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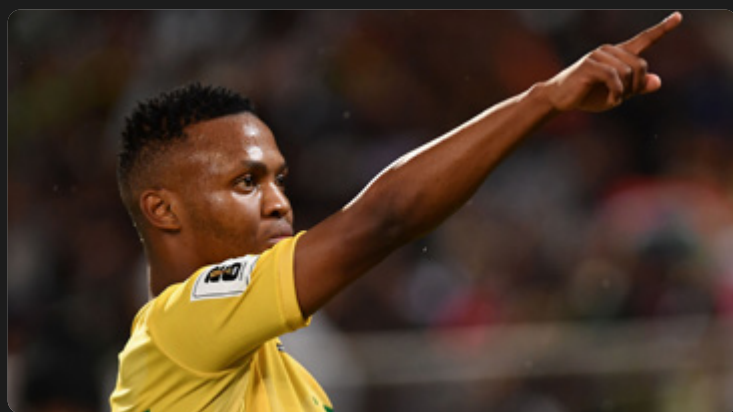
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TEAM OF THE WEEK
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NABI FINDS SUITORS?

After parting ways with Kaizer Chiefs, it seems Nasreddine Nabi might not be out of work for long. The Nedbank Cup-winning Tunisian tactician, who took charge of Amakhosi in 2024 and officially departed last month after 15 months at the helm, has quickly attracted fresh interest abroad. Word from his camp suggests that Iranian giants Esteghlal and UAE outfit Sharjah FC have both made approaches for his services, clear signs that Nabi’s reputation on the continent, and beyond, remains firmly intact.



DORTLEY TO RETURN BEFORE AFCON?

Kaizer Chiefs and Bafana Bafana defender Rushwin Dortley is in a race against time to get back to full fitness ahead of the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations in Morocco. The 23-year-old became one of the first names on Hugo Broos’ team sheet since making his debut after a successful COSAFA Cup, where he captained the national team. However, knee surgery towards the end of last season has seen him out of action since, and despite returning to training a few weeks ago, there’s been a delay with the player still in some discomfort. However, sources indicate he could be back in full training by mid-November.



FORMER PIRATES MAN LINKED WITH KRUGER

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DOWNS, CHIEFS & STELLIES ADVANCE, BUT BUCS BOW OUT

South African clubs enjoyed a weekend of high drama and mixed emotions on the continent.

Mamelodi Sundowns once again underlined their class, storming into the CAF Champions League group stages with a commanding 7-1 aggregate victory over Nigerian champions Remo Stars. The defending Betway Premiership winners wrapped up the job in style on Sunday, winning 2-0 in the second leg, thanks to goals from Nuno Santos and Peter Shalulile, as Miguel Cardoso’s men continued their relentless march toward another continental campaign.

Across town, however, it was heartbreak for Orlando Pirates. Despite a brave 3-0 second-leg win over St Eloi Lupopo at a buzzing Orlando Stadium, the Buccaneers were left devastated after losing 5-4 on penalties, following a 3-3 aggregate stalemate. Goals from Masindi Nemtajela, Yanela Mbuthuma, and Oswin Appollis, deep into stoppage time, had the home fans dreaming, but the visitors’ time-wasting antics and two red cards soured the spectacle.

In the CAF Confederation Cup, both Kaizer Chiefs and Stellenbosch FC safely booked their places in the next round. Chiefs turned on the style at Dobsonville Stadium, producing a confident 3-1 win over their opponents after a goalless first leg. Etiosa Ighodaro opened his Amakhosi account, with Zitha Kwinika and Glody

Lilepo adding the gloss, while an Aden McCarthy own goal provided the visitors’ only consolation.

At Athlone Stadium, Steve Barker’s Stellenbosch, semi-finalists last season, powered past 15 de Agosto of Equatorial Guinea with an emphatic 4-1 victory. Thato Khiba netted a first-half penalty, before Sanele Barns, Andre De Jong, and Chumani Butsaka sealed the rout. Thierry Henri Ibeng Tama scored for the visitors.

Meanwhile, Thembinkosi Lorch’s Wydad AC also progressed in the CAFCC, with Lorch on the scoresheet in a 5-1 second leg victory (6-1 aggregate) over Asante Kotoko.

In the CAFCL, former Sundowns players Neo Maema and Rushine De Reuck progressed to the group stages with Simba after their 3-0 aggregate win over Mandla Qhogi’s Nsingizini Hotspurs.

Rulani Mokwena’s MC Alger will also be in the CAFCL group stages after a hard-fought 1-1 aggregate battle against Colombe FC from Cameroon, with the Algerians advancing on the away goal rule.

The draw for both the CAF Champions League and CAF Confederation Cup group stages will take place in Johannesburg on Monday, November 3, and South Africa will once again have strong representation on the continental stage.



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‘THEY ARE UNLUCKY TO SCORE 3 GOALS AND STILL LOSE’

It was heartbreak for Orlando Pirates and their fans after they crashed out of the CAF Champions League before the group stages in a penalty shootout loss to the DR Congo side St Eloi Lupopo, after having overturned a 3-0 deficit from the first leg. Mamelodi Sundowns booked their place in the CAFCL group stages, while Kaizer Chiefs and Stellenbosch FC progressed to the CAF Confederation Cup group stages.

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

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

Sad Day For South African Football - Lindo Pep

“Orlando Pirates, bowing out of the CAF Champions League, is a sad day

for South African Football.
“This is an AFCON year, and the World Cup is around the corner.

“Bafana Bafana benefits from having Pirates and Mamelodi Sundowns players who compete in continental football. I’m sad that Pirates are out.

“I have faith in Abdeslam Ouaddou because I think he will do well for Pirates.

“I don’t think they will fire him after this. I think the Pirates management will keep him. He has improved this team. Pirates play good football.

“They are unlucky to score three goals and still lose on penalties. Ouaddou will be successful for Pirates despite this result.

“I think the red card to Tshepang Moremi changed the complexion of the game as well, because if he had stayed in the game, Pirates would have scored the winning goal.”

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ZWANE ON NEW INJURY, MBULE ADVICE & RETIREMENT TALK

Although injury cruelly kept him off the pitch when Bafana Bafana sealed their long-awaited FIFA World Cup qualification earlier this month, **THEMBA ZWANE** was still very much part of the moment. From the stands of a roaring Mbombela Stadium, the 36-year-old watched with pride as Hugo Broos' men booked their tickets to Canada, Mexico, and the USA, and when the final whistle blew, he joined

the celebrations with the same infectious joy that has defined his career. It was one of the most heartwarming scenes of that night on 14 October: the veteran playmaker, beaming, arm-in-arm with his teammates, celebrating a dream that he has helped keep alive through years of quiet excellence. Last week, iDiski Times' **LORENZ KÖHLER** caught up with Zwane at a launch for HONOR's new X7d 5G phone, one of Bafana's key sponsors, with the Mamelodi Sundowns star one of the brand's new ambassadors. Despite the setback of his injury, Zwane was in good spirits and already focused on the next challenge. He spoke about the frustration of being sidelined, his determination to return stronger, and his deep desire to contribute again to both Bafana Bafana's journey and Sundowns' relentless pursuit of trophies. For the man known as Mshishi, the mission remains the same: to inspire, to create, and, if all goes to plan, to lift silverware, including that CAF Champions League crown, before any thoughts on the final whistle of his glittering career.

Lorenz Köhler: Hey, Themba, I didn't know it, but you are an Honor ambassador now.

Themba Zwane: Ja

LK: When did this happen? And, why did you decide to partner with this brand?

TZ: Ja, no, it happened over the last few months, and obviously they approached me, and I was so interested because of the quality of the phone, and I think for me, it is the right phone to use.

LK: You've obviously had a couple of phones to test out, just for people who've never used the phone or never had the experience of the brand. What's it like? What do you like about the phone, and what attracted you to it?

TZ: Yeah, I mean, what I like about the phone, I mean - the slide. And there are a lot of apps in it. And for me, it's, it's easy to use, it's easy to use. And, ja, it's very good for us, and it's good for the teenagers.

LK: I mean, for most footballers, what's important for the phone is camera quality...

TZ: Ja!

LK: Battery life...

TZ: Ja!

LK: And just to be fast, man. So, have you found that it has all that?

TZ: Ja, 100% I mean, the quality of the pictures. And, you know, for us, we always want to take

"IF I CAN BE 100% FIT, AND I CAN CONTRIBUTE FOR MY CLUB, THEN I CAN CONTRIBUTE FOR THE NATIONAL TEAM. SO FOR ME, IT'S JUST TO BE POSITIVE."





pictures, want to post, and the videos, we always take videos. And, you know, we want to dance as a team. So for us, I think the quality is proper.

LK: Usually, they’re taking videos of you! You’re never taking the videos. Especially in the dressing room.

TZ: (Laughs out loud) Ja, 100% but I will give them the phone to take the videos for me, and obviously I will post it. And as I said, the quality is amazing.

LK: You are a shy guy. How do you handle that? Because I can always see when they’re taking the videos of you, you’re always looking down. How does it make you feel, when they are shooting you?

TZ: Obviously, they are my brothers. I’m used to them, and they know that I’m shy, that’s why they are taking videos. But overall, it’s just fun, man, we’re having fun as brothers, ja.

LK: Speaking about that, you had a special moment now, you were there at Mbombela. You witnessed the team that you’ve been with, together as a group, qualify for the FIFA World Cup.

TZ: Ja.

LK: How much relief was that for you? Because you always spoke of this as potentially your opportunity to go to a World Cup.

TZ: Ja, to be honest, after Zimbabwe’s game, it was stressful. But deep inside, I knew that the guys will get the job done. I knew that we have enough quality to win the game. And I mean, what we experienced at Mbombela, it was amazing. I mean, the happiness, the vibe, you know, and it was always good to see the country come together, I mean, to celebrate the victory, and we are so happy as a country. And I mean, overall, as players, we are so happy to qualify for the World Cup.

“FOR ME, I KNEW THAT IF SIPHO FOCUSES, OBVIOUSLY, HE WILL BE HERE IN THE NATIONAL TEAM, I MEAN, AND WE HAD SMALL TALKS BEFORE HE WENT TO PIRATES.”

LK: You had a special moment with Sipho Mbule as well. He was like, so happy to see you. I think he even left the president, and he picked you up and stuff...

TZ: (Laughs) Ja.

LK: What did you guys speak about? And you know, you were a teammate with him at Sundowns, and now he’s playing in that 10 role, and he seems to be very happy.

TZ: Ja.

LK: Like, did you ever think that Sipho would be in this position, you know, playing number 10, the position that you play as well?

TZ: Ja, Ja, 100% you know, I know the quality of Sipho. I mean, being close from when he played for SuperSport, and he came to Sundowns, you know, we always have chatted together. I think he’s got the quality that is amazing. And for me, I knew that if Sipho focuses, obviously, he will be here in the national team, I





mean, and we had small talks before he went to Pirates. I told him, I said, for me, ‘I think if you can push yourself, you will be in the national team, 100%.’ And that’s what he did, and I’m happy for him, and he’s doing well, you know, he’s putting more effort, he makes the team play, which is good for us.

LK: Another thing that I wanted to speak to you about is the previous match, where you came back, and you got injured again. I don’t know what injury it was exactly, but it clearly affected you emotionally, never seen you like that... What happened there, and what was going through your head?

TZ: You know, when you come back from injury, obviously, that excitement to come back, you obviously want to contribute to the team. You want to push yourself. You want to push yourself until you maintain your standard. After that injury, I tried to stretch, but I pulled my quad, and I was so disappointed. And in my mind, I was like, ‘Eish, there we go again’. I need to start afresh with the rehab and so on. I was so disappointed, but maybe after two days, I told myself that it happened. I can’t change it. I need to do the process of recovering, and just be strong. And thanks to the guys in the team, they support me all the time. So, ja,

LK: So, how far are you from being back on the field?

TZ: From now on, I think it’s two weeks to three weeks, because now I’m doing a lot of strengthening.

LK: Do you have excitement, anxiety?

“I WILL SAY, AS LONG AS GOD GIVES ME STRENGTH, I WILL STILL BE THERE IN THE FIELD AND PUSH MYSELF. BUT WHEN THE TIME IS RIGHT, I WILL ALSO RAISE MY HANDS AND SAY, ‘NOW IT’S TIME’.”

How are you feeling about knowing that AFCON is this close and the World Cup is not far? How is your headspace now? Like, excited? How are you feeling?

TZ: No. I think overall it’s excitement, knowing for sure that if I can be 100% fit, and I can contribute for my club, then I can contribute for the national team. So for me, it’s just to be positive and believe that from now on, I need to push myself, do more strengthening, extra training, so that I can be 100%.

LK: I know you don’t like to talk about yourself, but the coach has always said we need to find a replacement for Themba Zwane. You have very unique characteristics. What do you think, in your own words, makes you different? Because there are a lot of number 10s in this country...

TZ: (Laughs).

LK: Every laatiie in this country wants to be a number 10, even the



goalkeepers in the PSL, they were a number 10 when they were a laatie, you know what I mean. So what has made you different? And what do you think gave you that unique ability to do things that others can't?

TZ: Ja, I think for me, I can read the game very well. I can operate the half spaces very well. And I can create chances. I can see myself in the box area, creating those goals, scoring and, ja, man, I can control the game. But obvious, that comes with the understanding of the players that you play with.

LK: In that respect, you get a very different role in Bafana that elevates your performances...

TZ: Ja, ja, ja.

LK: What does that freedom give you, coming into the team where Broos says, you don't need to defend, Baba...

TZ: Ja, obviously it gives me a lot of energy, and he gave me the responsibility of, whenever I get the ball, I need to do something because the guys, they tell me that 'No, you don't have to come back all the way, you just have to come back maybe halfway'. Whenever we get the ball, we'll give you then, obviously, I need to do something in attack also. And ja, as I said, the understanding that we have, I mean, it's amazing.

LK: Strikers are also a position that, in this country, people talk a lot. 'We don't have strikers, blah, blah, blah'. You played with Makgopa, you've played with Foster, you've played with Rayners, club level and international level. What do you think of them as our main strikers going forward?

TZ: Ja, to be honest, the three of them, they are quality, with different qualities that they have. Makgopa will give you a different dimension. Even Foster will give you different dimensions, even Rayners. So, for me, I think they offer different things at the highest level. They are quality. And for me, when I play with them. I mean, it's that understanding, obviously starting at training, obviously knowing for sure that if I play with Lyle, I need to act like this. If I play with

“TO BE HONEST, AFTER ZIMBABWE’S GAME, IT WAS STRESSFUL. BUT DEEP INSIDE, I KNEW THAT THE GUYS WILL GET THE JOB DONE.”

Makgopa, I need to act like this; it's that understanding, that's all.

LK: What do you hope to achieve this season at the club level? And obviously, we spoke a little bit about your international ambitions, which are to be there at these major tournaments. What would you like to achieve?

TZ: Now, at club level, obviously, I just wanna win all the trophies that are remaining. And that's most important, and contribute for my team. And obviously, the biggest one that we want, the Champions League. And obviously internationally, to go to the AFCON and win the AFCON and again, go to the World Cup in June and be there for the national team and try to contribute and push ourselves and do as best as we can.

LK: You know, better than anyone, how long do you still have in the league?

TZ: To be honest, I will say, as long as God gives me strength, I will still be there in the field and push myself. But when the time is right, I will also raise my hands and say, 'Now it's time'.

LK: I have to ask, say everything goes right this season. You win the league, you win the Champions League, you win the AFCON, you do well in the USA... Wouldn't you maybe say, 'I'm done now?'

TZ: (Laughs) We'll talk about that when we get there.

LK: All the best, Themba!



MONARE MAKES PLEA OVER HIS ISIPHANDLA INCIDENT

Sekhukhune United have enjoyed a good start to the 2025/26 Betway Premiership season; however have suffered their first league loss in the Limpopo derby against Polokwane City, having sat at the summit of the league log for eight weeks. They are currently in second position with 20 points from nine games, a single point behind current leaders Mamelodi Sundowns, while the Limpopo side has a game in hand but were also knocked out of the Carling Knockout Cup. While most believe Babina Noko are a dark horse in this season's league title chase, Sekhukhune midfielder THABANG MONARE, like his coach Eric Tinkler, says it's too early to talk about that. Monare speaks to iDiski Times journalist LETHABO KGANYAGO in this addition about taking it a game at a time, lessons drawn from their MTN8 campaign and also speaks about the incident that overshadowed his side's league game against AmaZulu earlier in the season at the Peter Mokaba Stadium around his Isiphandla saying it wasn't an issue of faith but rules and principles.

Lethabo Kganyago: Thabang, thanks for speaking to us. Firstly, what was that trolling celebration in the game against Kaizer Chiefs? Why are you trolling other kids?

Thabang Monare: The person that I was actually trolling was my teammate. That's what that was about, and unfortunately, people take it out of context. But that was about my teammate, that was about my teammate's shoe. It had nothing to do with anyone, unfortunately, but you know, people are entitled to their own opinions, and it's okay.

LK: Yeah. And obviously, a good

“THE PERSON THAT I WAS ACTUALLY TROLLING WAS MY TEAMMATE. THAT'S WHAT THAT WAS ABOUT, YOU KNOW, AND UNFORTUNATELY, PEOPLE TAKE IT OUT OF CONTEXT.”

start to the season on your side. How's everybody feeling about it? How are you feeling about it, having spent eight weeks at the top?

TM: It's good, you know, it's good. That's the kind of pressure that I feel every footballer deserves, the kind of pressure that always requires you to bring your A game. And yeah, I think that's a positive kind of pressure. I mean, if you look at it, you could be having pressure of getting off the bottom. So I think this is positive pressure, and every athlete deserves to have the kind of pressure that gets us beyond our limits.

LK: The coach has said it's too early to speak about the title contention. What do you feel is going to be needed to sustain this?

TM: A huge focus. And the coach is actually right, that is too early. So right now we have to focus on our next game. Because I think the biggest problem could be us talking about the end while we are still on a journey. So I think at this point in time, we just need to take it a game at a time, and that's

where the focus comes. Forget about what's happening tomorrow, focus on what's happening today and give all your energy on today, whether it's a session, whether it's a match, whether it's a friendly game.

LK: And what are the lessons that you guys drew from the MTN8 in as much as you didn't reach the final?

TM: I think what we learned in that is opportunities, if we make use of our opportunities, that would be the difference, because I don't think we are a totally different team compared to what we were in the MTN8. I think what we learned is that when we get opportunities, you convert them and that wins your games.

LK: Desh, I don't know how comfortable you are talking about this now. But I saw you address this on social media, and I was at the said game as well, issues of faith. When what happened to you in that game happened, and you stood up, but eventually, if you didn't even play the entire game, how important was it for you to stand up for yourself and your beliefs in that situation?

TM: I think it was very important for me to actually understand the rules of the game. I mean, at the end of the day, whatever happens, we have to respect the game and the rules of the game. So my argument here is not about my faith. I'm not going to sit here and explain my faith and try and defend my faith. At the end, the rules and regulations are there. So the argument that I have is that if it happens to me in the same game, if I'm the person that has to be taken off because of certain things that I have within me, or certain rules, and other players from the next team play the whole 90 minutes who have the same things that I have, then that's a problem.

LK: So what happens on the left must happen on the right...

TM: That's my thing, you know, because I'm not going to sit here and argue or explain my faith. My argument is that if it happens to me, if it [my Isiphandla] has to be off, it has to be off from everyone. If I have to be taken off for certain things, it has to apply to everyone. It's like if they say a professional foul is a red card, then it has to happen for everyone, that's my argument. So I'm not going to sit and say, 'Oh, this is what I believe in, and this is what I don't believe in'. That's irrelevant in this kind of an argument. So my argument is that, if it happens to me, the next person that has the same, it has to happen to them.

LK: So a matter of rules and principles.



"IF IT [MY ISIPHANDLA] HAS TO BE OFF, IT HAS TO BE OFF FROM EVERYONE. IF I HAVE TO BE TAKEN OFF FOR CERTAIN THINGS, IT HAS TO APPLY TO EVERYONE."

TM: Yes, it's a matter of principle and rules, yes. If you want to stand up today and say, 'Okay, I do not want this,' it shouldn't select faces. It should be a principle and a rule of saying, everybody, whether you are from there, you are from this corner of the world, you're from there, this is how we work.

LK: Sometimes taking a stand like that can get you benched or even taken out of the game metaphorically also. Do you think the coach also took it in the same manner?

TM: Yes, that's how everyone took it because it was not a matter of explaining our beliefs and faith at the time. It was a matter of saying, 'Okay, if it happens this way, then why are we not having it happening the same way on the other side?'. And if you remember, they got a goal while I was out, and that could go a long way, you understand what I'm saying. And imagine if we lose this game, players lose their jobs, coaches lose their jobs, and no one talks about this thing. If we lost the game, people would probably say this coach is not good or this midfielder is not good. Everyone now tends to forget what actually transpired.

LK: Thank you so much.

‘I THINK WE CAN WIN AFCON’

Former Orlando Pirates winger Mohau Nkota is living the dream. In what has been a whirlwind year, the 20-year-old has gone from an exciting academy prospect to a national hero, playing his part in helping Bafana Bafana qualify for their first FIFA World Cup finals since hosting the tournament in 2010.

Nkota's story is one of rapid ascent. He made his senior debut off the bench against Richards Bay in September 2024, but it was less than a month later, on 25 October 2024, that the football world really sat up and took notice. In only his fourth appearance for the Buccaneers, the youngster stole the spotlight with a stunning brace against AmaZulu, the night he officially announced himself to South African football.

For those who had followed his rise through the DStv Diski Challenge, it came as no surprise. Nkota had been electric for a few seasons in Pirates' youth ranks, a winger blessed with explosive pace, sharp instincts, and a fearless attitude that made defenders uneasy.

“We could see Nkota, that he will make it far,” his former youth coach at Pirates, Mandla Qhogi, said. Qhogi, now the head coach of eSwatini outfit Nsingizini Hotspurs, was one of those who scouted and recruited Nkota for the Bucs.

“He possesses a lot of good attributes that a player in his position must have.”

Joseph Makhanya, who was Pirates' DDC coach at the time, and worked with Nkota, as well as other Pirates and Bafana starlets Relebohile Mofokeng and Mbekezeli Mbokazi, told iDiski

Times it was an honour to work with such talent.

“These are diamonds, so diamonds we need to handle them with care,” Makhanya emphasised.

“Thank you to Orlando Pirates for giving me the opportunity, in trusting me, to handle these fragile goods. There are a whole lot of people who make sure that there's a contribution that has been made to these diamonds up until we see them, where they eventually find themselves, which is our first team.”

Under Jose Riveiro, Nkota's confidence soared. He went on to feature 39 times across all competitions, his energy and unpredictability giving the Buccaneers an extra spark and 12 goal contributions (7 goals and 5 assists) in total. Four of those goals, and two of those assists, came in the CAF Champions League as Pirates reached the semi-finals.

For Riveiro, Nkota's age was never an issue.

“It is not about when he was born, whether he is 19, 20 or 30 years old,” Riveiro said in 2024.

“It does not make any difference, because when a player is ready, he is ready – and when he is talented, he is talented. People usually talk about the risks of playing a young player, but for me, the risk is playing a player who is not ready.

“In our case, the boys are showing that they are ready and capable of surviving in different environments, and we are



happy about that. They are also inspiring other youngsters in our structures to be ready, because age is not going to be a problem if they are ready.”

That Nkota was ready didn’t go unnoticed, and soon Hugo Broos came calling, handing Nkota a national team debut in June against Tanzania.

He didn’t take long to make his mark in the green and gold either. In just his third cap, Nkota scored his first international goal, a crucial strike in the World Cup qualifier against Lesotho that helped keep Bafana’s qualification dreams alive.

And if that wasn’t enough, he’s now flying the South African flag abroad. Nkota’s move to Al-Ettifaq in Saudi Arabia was a major step, both professionally and financially, and once again, he hit the ground running. On his debut, he scored and assisted in a 2-1 victory over Al-Kholood, immediately endearing himself to his new fans.

For a player who only a year ago was dreaming of regular game-time with Pirates’ first team, Nkota’s story is proof that talent, patience, and hard work can turn dreams into destiny, and this young star’s journey is only just beginning.

“You know, even on my first day being with Bafana Bafana, eish – I didn’t even think this was going to happen for me,” Nkota told iDiski Times.

“But for me, this right now, it’s a dream come true for me – seeing all this happening. I’m seeing it now, sinking in.

“So I’m happy for myself, I’m happy that all my hard work is paying off. I’m happy for my teammates, they are my brothers, I’m happy for everyone – even the fans who came to support us. The support they gave us was important.

“And lastly, I need to thank the coach for this opportunity he gave me. For us, it was to come to today’s game with

“EVEN ON MY FIRST DAY BEING WITH BAFANA BAFANA, EISH - I DIDN’T EVEN THINK THIS WAS GOING TO HAPPEN FOR ME. BUT FOR ME, THIS RIGHT NOW, IT’S A DREAM COME TRUE FOR ME.”

the right mindset, you see, to come and win the game, and score more goals to qualify for the World Cup. Thank you all for the support, that’s all I can say.”

It’s fair to say the Kimberley-born footballer is living out his wildest dreams, and by his own admission, much of what has happened over the past year has felt almost surreal, like watching his own story unfold in a dream he never wants to wake up from.

“No, I’m a very happy man!” Nkota enthused.

“I’m very happy! At my age? I’m 20 years old and I’m going to play at the FIFA World Cup? So for me, it’s a dream, I’m living this dream – what can I say?”

Nkota’s rise is also a beacon of hope for young, gifted footballers from regions long overlooked, places like the Northern Cape, where raw talent often goes unnoticed. Though the province has produced a handful of stars over the years, it’s only in recent times that professional football has truly found a foothold there. For many aspiring youngsters, opportunities remain scarce, which makes Nkota’s journey from Kimberley’s dusty pitches to the world stage all the more inspiring.



“Yoh... my message to them, this is possible [what has happened to me],” Nkota said.

“Don’t mind what others say to you. Just always continue to work hard, be disciplined, listen to your elders. I think for me it’s about that, leaving everything behind, and just keep focused.”

Though he may not tower over defenders, Nkota’s strength and tenacity have stood out in Bafana colours. He’s not easily pushed off the ball, and his ability to hold his own against bigger opponents is no accident; it’s the result of dedicated work on his physical game, something he says he’s made a personal focus in recent seasons.

“You know I’ve been working really hard on this, I’ve been trying so hard to build my body, to be stronger, because I’m short,” Nkota explained.

“But I think what’s helped me to get to this level is my speed. My skills, for me, it’s just to go out there and play, enjoy what I can offer, and not to be scared.”

Broos had also been impressed by Nkota’s physical contribution, and after the 1-1 draw against Nigeria, he hailed his performance.

“He’s fantastic, he works a lot on the pitch,” Broos had said.

“He’s not lazy, not at all; he’s technically good and quick. It also seems like he doesn’t have a disadvantage of his height; he is strong also, you don’t push

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him away. He’s made enormous evolution since he was promoted at Pirates. Every week, he has become better and better.”

Nkota wasn’t anywhere near the last AFCON squad; in fact, when Bafana clinched bronze, he hadn’t even made his Pirates debut yet. Fast forward to now, and the 20-year-old is dreaming much bigger. With the finals in Morocco fast approaching, Nkota isn’t content with just making the squad; he’s determined to play his part in helping South Africa go all the way and bring the trophy home.

“Yes – I think we can win AFCON!” Nkota, who will be 21 in November, added.

“Because I think the last time we were third place in the last tournament, but this time around, I think we can win, with the squad we have now, it’s our goal going to Morocco, to win this AFCON.”



DELANO’S STORY: FROM COLVILLE TO CARLING GLORY

By Matshelane Mamabolo

When DELANO ABRAHAMS steps onto the pitch, you can almost sense the quiet defiance in his stride – the silent echo of a journey carved through rejection, faith, and unyielding family support. It’s the same energy that saw him rise from footballing obscurity to help Magesi FC win the Carling Knockout title, toppling giants such as Orlando Pirates and Mamelodi Sundowns en route to glory.

Now, with the football public watching, Abrahams is preparing to do it again – to be that thorn in the flesh; that unheralded hero whose name refuses to be forgotten when Magesi meets the Buccaneers once more.

Abrahams’ story is one of persistence forged in the modest neighbourhood of Colville in Kimberley, where dreams often collide with the harsh realities of limited opportunity.

“Where I’m from, there aren’t many chances,” he reflects quietly during our chat at Seshego Stadium during a Dikwena training session he sat out due to injury. “But I always knew what I could do. I knew that if I kept going, something would eventually open up.”

It’s a sentiment that underpins the narrative of a player who has learned to thrive on self-belief - even when the doors kept closing.

Before the spotlight and the silverware, there was the grind: the constant trials, the near misses, the uncertainty of whether the dream would ever take form.

“There was a time when I thought maybe football just wasn’t going to happen,” he admits. “But my parents, my family – they never let me give up.”

The Foundation of Faith and Family

Unlike many of his peers who grew up in fractured homes, Delano speaks with deep gratitude about the stability and grounding his parents gave him.

“Having both my mom and dad around has been the biggest blessing,” he says. “They kept me focused and respectful – that’s everything.”

He pauses for a moment, his voice softening. “You know, so many kids grow up without that. Sometimes there’s no father figure. For me, it made all the difference. They’re the ones who believed even when I couldn’t see the way forward.”

Their belief carried him through every rejection – from trials that ended with polite “we’ll call you” to seasons spent on the fringes of teams – Sundowns being one of them – that didn’t quite see his value. Each disappointment could have been the end of the story, but for Delano, it became motivation.

“It was my family that gave me the strength to start again every time,” he says. “They reminded me that what’s meant for me won’t miss me.”

The Breakthrough: Making Magesi Matter

The turning point came when Magesi took a chance on him. The Limpopo-based side, relatively new to top-flight attention, provided Delano not just a team, but a platform after he’d toiled at the University of Pretoria in the country’s second-tier division.

In last year’s Carling Knockout, he seized the moment with both hands – scoring crucial goals against two of South Africa’s biggest clubs, Pirates and Sundowns.

“Those are the games everyone in the country watches,” he says with a grin. “You dream of scoring in matches like



those.”

His goal against Pirates – a perfectly timed finish born straight out of a rehearsed training move – remains etched in his mind.

“It’s funny,” he chuckles. “We’d practised that exact play – the timing, the movement – everything. And it worked, just like it did on the training ground.”

The victory over Pirates was particularly satisfying, an announcement by the club that Magese weren’t in the elite league just to add to the numbers.

“People didn’t see us coming,” he says. “But we believed in ourselves, and that belief took us all the way.”

The Underdog’s Fire

To many, Magese’s Carling Knockout triumph was a fairytale. To Delano, it was validation.

“Winning that cup – that’s the highlight of my career so far,” he admits. “It showed that hard work pays off. We weren’t given a chance, but we made our own.”

Now, as Magese prepares to face Pirates again, Delano’s focus sharpens: “Of course, I want to score against them again,” he laughs. “Hopefully, I can do it one more time.”

There’s a quiet confidence in his tone – not arrogance, but the certainty of a man who knows what it feels like to have fought his way from the bottom. He understands what Pirates represent: tradition, power, a near-mythic status in South African football. But to Delano, they’re also just another challenge, another chance to prove that hard work and heart can rival history.

Resilience Through Rejection

What makes Delano’s journey

“THEY [PIRATES] WON’T UNDERESTIMATE US THIS TIME. WE’RE READY. I BELIEVE WE CAN CAUSE ANOTHER UPSET.”

remarkable is not just his talent, but his resilience.

“There were so many times I thought it was over,” he admits. “You go for trials, you do your best, and then they tell you you’re not what they’re looking for. That’s hard. It hits you here,” he says, tapping his chest.

But he never stopped.

“What kept me going was the knowledge that I hadn’t shown my best yet. I’d say to myself, ‘Lano, there’s still more in you.’”

He recalls times when he was called up for trials multiple times, only to be dropped again.

“I’d go, perform, get feedback, and then be told to come again – or not at all. But I just couldn’t quit. Football is all I ever wanted.”

It’s clear that behind his calm demeanour lies an unbreakable will – the kind of inner fire that only comes from years of pushing through “no” to get to “yes”.

A Life Anchored in Gratitude

Ask him what he’s most proud of, and the answer comes without hesitation: “My family”.

He speaks of his parents not just as supporters, but as the compass that’s guided every step of his journey.

“They’re everything to me. Without them, I don’t think I’d be here. They’re the reason I stayed grounded.”

His upbringing in a household built on respect, faith, and humility shaped him into the person he is today – calm, focused, and quietly ambitious.

“They taught me to respect people, to keep my head down, and to never stop working. That’s how I live, even now.”

Inspiring the Next Generation

Now that his story is one of triumph, Delano feels a responsibility to the younger players watching from the same dusty fields he once trained on.

“There’s so much talent back home,” he says. “But talent alone isn’t enough. You have to be disciplined. You have to listen, even when it’s tough.”

He hopes that his journey – from countless rejections to cup glory – can serve as proof that persistence works.

“I want them to see that it’s possible; that even if people don’t believe in you at first, you can still make it. You just have to believe in yourself and keep pushing.”

Life Beyond the Pitch

Away from football, Delano is refreshingly grounded. There’s no hint of the arrogance that sometimes comes with newfound success. He enjoys quiet moments and finds peace in the simplicity of life.

“People see the games and the goals, but behind that, I’m just a normal guy,” he says, smiling. “I like spending time at home. It keeps me balanced.”

It’s that balance – that refusal to get carried away – that makes him such a rare figure in modern football: ambitious, but never boastful; confident, but always humble.

Another Date with Destiny

As Magesi prepare to face Pirates again, Delano knows expectations will be high – both from fans and himself.

“They know what we can do now,” he says with a grin. “They won’t underestimate us this time.”

Still, there’s a quiet sense of purpose in his voice, the same tone that once carried him through years of rejection.

“We’re ready. I believe we can cause another upset. Football is about moments, and when that moment comes, you have to be ready.”

He’s not just chasing another goal; he’s chasing another reminder – to himself,



“WHERE I’M FROM, THERE AREN’T MANY CHANCES. BUT I ALWAYS KNEW WHAT I COULD DO.”

his family, and every kid watching, including three of his own – that hard work and faith can rewrite any story.

The Power of Belief

Listening to Delano talk, it’s clear that his journey has been about much more than football. It’s about resilience, family, and the power of belief.

“Rejection doesn’t mean the end,” he says softly. “Sometimes it’s just preparation. Every ‘no’ I got prepared me for the right ‘yes.’”

It’s that perspective – the ability to see growth in failure – that sets him apart. He’s not bitter about the past; he’s grateful for it.

“If everything had come easy, maybe I wouldn’t appreciate where I am now,” he reflects.

As the next clash with Pirates looms, Delano Abrahams stands as living proof of what’s possible when passion meets persistence. He’s no longer the player waiting for a chance – he’s the man creating them. He’s not the hopeful kid from Kimberley anymore; he’s a Carling Knockout champion with a story that inspires beyond football.

And yet, through it all, one truth remains at the core of his journey: family.

“They’re my reason,” he says simply. “When I play, I play for them.”

Come match day, when Magesi lines up against the mighty Buccaneers Pirates, you can be sure of one thing – Delano Abrahams will once again play with that same fire, that same faith, and that same unshakable belief that turned rejection into redemption.



THE TOP SCORING BETWAY PREMIERSHIP CLUBS THUS FAR

With roughly a third of the Betway Premiership season already in the books for most teams, iDiski Times takes a closer look at which clubs have been finding the back of the net most effectively.

It's been a season defined by fine margins rather than fireworks. While the intensity and competitiveness

have gone up a notch, the goals have not flowed quite as freely as they did last term. So far, 147 goals have been scored across the division, a modest return compared to the same stage of the 2024/25 campaign, when the tally was between 10 and 15 goals higher.

Of course, context matters. This season's fixture list has been more congested than usual, with teams juggling continental commitments, cup fixtures, FIFA breaks and travel, all of which have taken a visible toll. The result? A tighter league table, fewer runaway wins, and more tactical chess matches than end-to-end thrillers.

1) Mamelodi Sundowns – 17 goals, 1st position

Defending champions Mamelodi Sundowns once again find themselves where they've become most comfortable, top of both the table and the goalscoring charts, with 17 goals in their opening 10 matches. Yet, by their own lofty standards, it's been a slightly more measured start. A year ago, at the same stage, they had already netted 20 goals and won nine of their first 10. This time around, they've still only suffered one defeat but have been held to three draws, winning six.

Statistically, the Brazilians remain a cut above, averaging 12.7 shots per game, constantly keeping opposition defences under pressure. Iqraam Rayners has been the headline act, continuing his rich vein of form with six goals so far, while Tashreeq Matthews, fast becoming one of the PSL's most influential attacking players, has chipped in with four goals and four assists, narrowly edging Rayners as Sundowns' most productive player this season.

Record goalscorer Peter Shalulile,



still finding his rhythm, has added two goals, while five other players have each contributed one, a reminder that this is a side where goals can come from almost anywhere on the pitch. Even in a season where the champions haven't quite hit full stride, their dominance remains unmistakable.

2) TS Galaxy 14 goals, 8th position

It's been a promising step forward for TS Galaxy this season, a team that seems to be discovering its spark. After nine games last campaign, the Rockets were languishing in 12th place, with just eight goals to their name. Yet even then, there were hints of revival: after going winless in their opening six fixtures, a late surge began just after the resignation of Sead Ramović signalled the end of an era.

Now, under Adnan Berganović, in what is his second season at the helm, Galaxy are showing signs of a side trying to balance consistency and ambition. Four wins and four losses in their opening matches tell a story of a team still in transition, but one that's clearly moving in the right direction.

The standout revelation has been Seluleko Mahlambi, whose clinical edge has brought him four goals and three assists, a remarkable return from a player few had pegged as a leading light.

Alongside him, Puso Dithejane has been equally lively, contributing three goals and two assists, the duo combining to inject energy and unpredictability into Galaxy's attack.

With an average of 9.9 shots per game, the Rockets aren't always the most prolific side, but they are efficient, a team learning how to make the most of their moments. If Berganović can harness that momentum, Galaxy might just become one of the season's quiet success stories.

3) Sekhukhune United 13 goals, 2nd position

It's also been a notable step up for Sekhukhune United, who have begun the 2025/26 season with a quiet confidence and a sharper edge in front of goal. At this stage last campaign, Babina Noko sat fifth on the table with nine goals from their first nine matches.

This time around, they've gone one better. Having played one game fewer than Mamelodi Sundowns, they find themselves within striking

distance of the summit, and a win in their game in hand would see them leapfrog the reigning champions.

Much of that success has been built on the experience and composure of Bradley Grobler, the seasoned striker proving that class really does age well. A shrewd piece of business by Eric Tinkler, Grobler has delivered exactly what was expected, and more, with six goals already to his name. Sekhukhune's attacking intent is reflected in their 13.2 shots per game, a statistic that underscores how much more adventurous they've become in the final third.

Supporting Grobler, Vusimuzi Mncube, and Thabang Monare have both chipped in with two goals apiece. Meanwhile, Keletso Makgalwa continues to thrive in his



creative role, already tallying four assists, his sharpness and vision often the spark behind Babina Noko’s best moments.

4) Golden Arrows 13 goals, 9th position

Golden Arrows have found the net more freely this season, three goals better off than they were at this stage in 2024/25, yet paradoxically, they find themselves two places lower on the Betway Premiership table after nine games. It’s been that kind of campaign for Mamelodi Mngqithi’s side: flashes of brilliance, moments of frustration, and a lingering sense that they’re just one gear away from clicking fully into rhythm.

Arrows have averaged 9.8 shots per game, a sign of their attacking intent, even if not all those opportunities

have been converted. Leading the line with consistency and confidence is Sede Dion, who continues to prove his worth as one of the league’s sharpest finishers, already bagging six goals this season.

Behind him, Siyanda Ndlovu, known to many fans under his former surname, Mthanti, has been a revelation. His transformation from promising youngster to key performer has been one of the season’s pleasant surprises, with three goals and four assists to his name. He’s formed a dangerous creative axis with another surprise act, Philani Kumalo, whose own four assists underline his growing influence.

5) Orlando Pirates 10 goals, 3rd position

While Orlando Pirates haven’t been quite as prolific in front of goal as they were at this stage last season, 10 goals now compared to 13 then, there’s still reason for optimism at Mayfair. The Buccaneers have only played eight league matches, and crucially, if they were to win their two games in hand, they’d leapfrog both Mamelodi Sundowns and Sekhukhune United to the summit.

New head coach Abdeslam Ouaddou will, however, be well aware of the danger of déjà vu. Around this exact point last season, Jose Riveiro’s Pirates also began brightly before being overtaken by the relentless Sundowns machine, a momentum shift that ultimately defined the title race. This time, Ouaddou will be desperate to avoid a similar fate, and that means turning possession dominance into goals.

The irony is that Pirates have been this list’s most trigger-happy side, averaging 14 shots per game, yet the finishing touch has too often deserted them. No single player has emerged as a consistent goal threat just yet, though there are encouraging signs of balance and shared responsibility across the front line.

Patrick Maswanganyi and Tshepang Moremi have both found the net twice, while Evidence Makgopa continues to impress with his work rate and link-up play, registering three assists and a goal to lead the club’s direct goal contributions. Oswin Appollis and Deon Hotto have also chipped in with three each, both scoring once and setting up two more.

The pieces are clearly in place, creativity, depth, and attacking movement, but what Pirates need now is ruthlessness. With the title race already tightening, the coming weeks could determine whether Ouaddou’s side merely competes or



truly contends.

6) Durban City 10 goals, 5th position

Durban City could hardly have scripted a better start to life back in the Betway Premiership. Fresh from promotion, the KZN club have adapted to the top flight with impressive composure, sitting comfortably inside the top five after ten matches, a position that speaks to both their resilience and ambition. With ten goals in ten games, City have shown that they’re not just here to make up the numbers; they’re here to compete.

At the heart of it all is Gavin Hunt, the seasoned tactician who has quickly stamped his authority on his new side. Hunt has once again struck a balance between structure and enterprise, and it’s paying dividends. He’ll know there’s a long road ahead, but for now, he can take pride in a squad that has hit the ground running and shown the character of seasoned campaigners rather than newcomers.

City are averaging a healthy 10.7 shots per game, a clear indication of their intent to take the game to opponents. Letsie Koapeng has been the main marksman with three goals, while Samkelo Maseko and Joslin Kamatuka have both added two apiece, providing the attacking variety that keeps defences guessing. Behind them, Haashim Domingo has been pulling the strings with two assists, while Trevor Mokwena and Saziso Magawana have each chipped in with a goal and an assist, reflecting the collective nature of the team’s approach.

7) Marumo Gallants 10 goals, 10th position

It’s been a measured but meaningful improvement for Marumo Gallants this season. After nine games last campaign, they had scored just two fewer goals and sat two places lower on the log, proof that while progress may be steady rather than spectacular, it’s certainly visible under Alexandre Lafitte’s guidance.

The young Frenchman has been working meticulously to build Gallants’ identity, blending structure with a bit more attacking intent. His side now averages 10.2 shots per game, a modest but encouraging figure that shows their willingness to take the initiative rather than merely absorb pressure.

Leading the charge have been Sekela Sithole and Bheki Mabuza, both of whom have stepped up

impressively, registering two goals and an assist each. Their industry and sharpness in the final third have given Gallants a much-needed edge in tight games. Meanwhile, Teboho Motloung has emerged as a creative spark, laying on three assists, while Jaisen Clifford has chipped in with two crucial goals of his own.

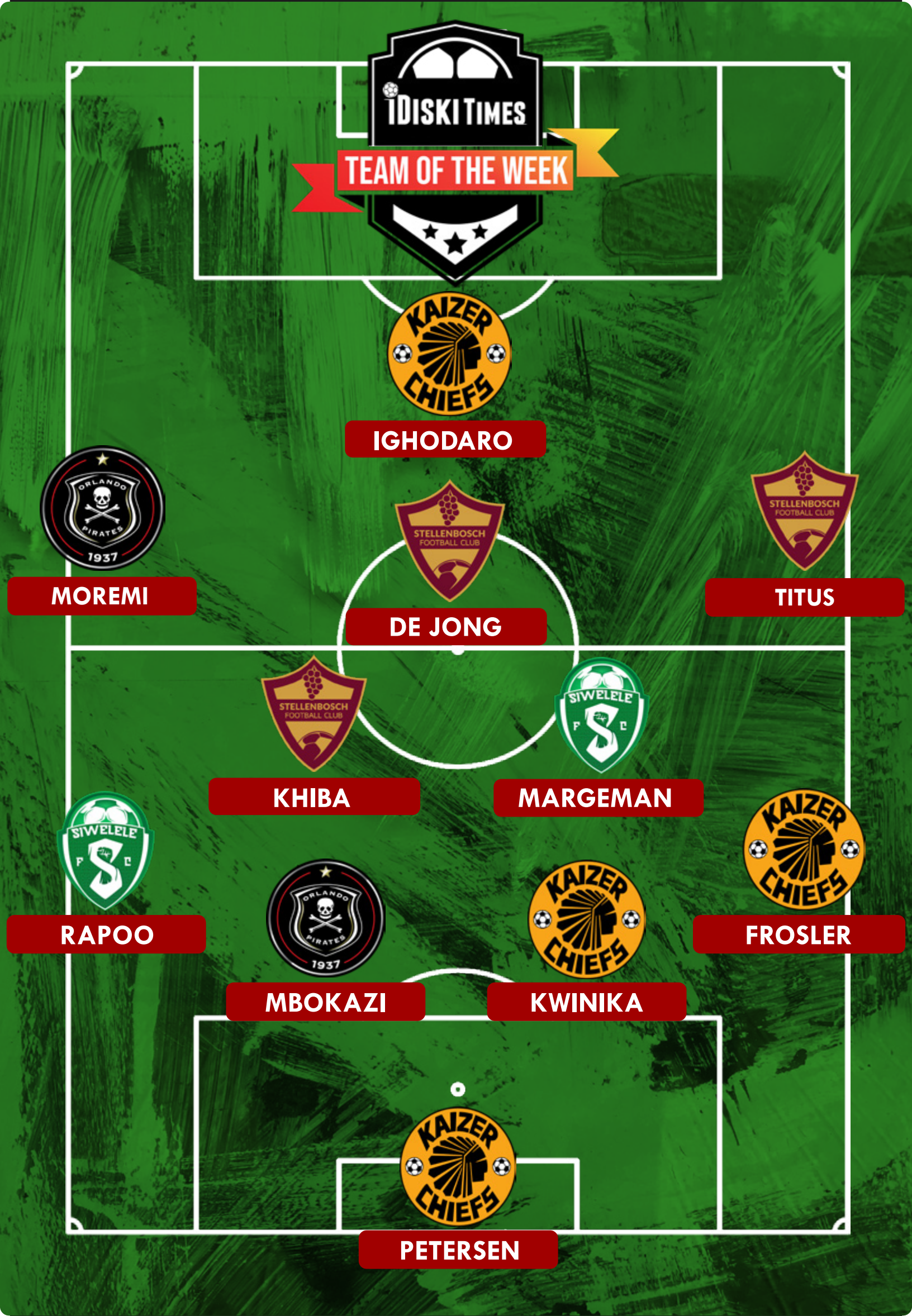
The Others

AmaZulu are one goal away from double figures, while Magesi and Kaizer Chiefs are a further goal behind with eight each.

Stellenbosch, Richards Bay, Polokwane City, Chippa United and Orbit College have all scored seven goals each, while Siwelele FC are the club with the fewest goals, with just four in their 10 games thus far.



IDISKI TEAM OF THE WEEK - PREMIERSHIP 22 OCTOBER 2025



ACE OF THE WEEK:
FAIZ ABRAHAMS

Our iDiski Times Ace of the Week is 20-year-old Faiz Abrahams, who continues to impress abroad in Israel. The Stellenbosch FC loanee produced a sensational display for Hapoel Kfar Saba, scoring his first senior hat-trick in a 3–1 victory over Hapoel Shalem last Friday. It was a standout performance that underlined his growing maturity and attacking instinct. A product of the Cape Town Spurs academy, Abrahams has already enjoyed success on the international stage as part of Raymond Mdaka’s side that lifted the CAF U20 Africa Cup of Nations title. Although he missed out on the FIFA U20 World Cup, the young forward is clearly making up for lost opportunities, and showing why he’s one to watch for the future.



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:
Rulani Mokwena

This week we have the great pleasure to talk to Rulani Mokwena. Rulani is the former head coach of Orlando Pirates, Mamelodi Sundowns and Wydad AC. He is the current head coach of MC Alger in Algeria. In this interview, we will discuss some of his footballing ideas from a technical perspective. Which is no doubt going to be extremely exciting.

Coach Rulani, thank you for your time! Firstly, in some coaching circles, there is a big debate about relational and positional play on attack. What is your perspective on this debate, and also what role do overloads play in your playing style, particularly when in possession?



Relational vs Positional Play — and
the Role of Overloads

RM: For me, the conversation around relational versus positional play is not a debate of either–or, but an ongoing synthesis between structure and connection.

At Wydad Casablanca, I arrived into a club whose identity was built around positional discipline – a fixed 1-4-3-3, wingers on the line, and a very vertical orientation. To progress, we had to inject relational intelligence into that structure – the ability for players to read one another through angles, distances, and coordinated movements rather than predetermined zones and as you can imagine, this is something that takes time, especially when you have to incorporate 29

new players into a new environment, a new culture and a new league, and induct them into a chemistry-inclined way of playing. Chemistry in itself, tells you that it’s developed over time, through interactions both on and off the pitch. The 1-1 draw against Raja Casablanca was one of the first visible signs of that evolution: we built our circulation diagonally, not laterally, always moving inside-out and back in again to unbalance their block.

Recruitment was crucial to make that work. We needed players with the educational foundation to understand football as a relational game – Sakhi, Moutaraji, Abdel, and Lorch all brought that technical awareness and capacity to play between lines. Getting Moufid and Boucheta to find comfort in moving into central positions for more diagonal connections through the half space, took time, but they already had the tactical inclination to make these movements in an offensive sense but needed to work on their ability to arrive in the situations that would allow for better field

progression, but signing goalkeeper Benabid was most significant. His composure and orientation allowed us to initiate diagonality from deeper zones, provoking the opposition to move from zone 2 into higher pressing positions and now we could use the goalkeeper as the first connector to tilt the opposition’s press, similarly to what we could do with Ronza. Unfortunately, we only secured many of these profiles in January, midway into the season, which delayed the development process. But their impact was immediate – from their arrival onward, we never lost a match. That shows how essential the right profiles are when building a relational-positional identity.

At Sundowns, the process was far more mature – nearly three years in development. Our diagonal staircase – or escadinha, as described in Brazilian relationism – was formed by Teboho Mokoena, Modiba as an inverted full-back, and Allende operating as the Mezzella between the central and wide corridors at tiles. They embodied perfect timing, synchronisation, and the “tilts” that underpin diagonality. It was no longer only about positions, but about distances and orientations. The role of the hybrid centre-back was crucial to this, and Rivaldo and Zungu were the protagonists for this action, especially when knowing we could have Ronwen 10 metres higher than most goalkeepers in positioning for developing the first phase of the attack and developing artificial transitions, which was very important in a very counter-attack dominant league like the PSL.

At MC Alger, we are still at the beginning of this process. The model takes time – but the foundations are very encouraging. Players like Benkhemassa (who played in Spain for Malaga) and Tabti have the technical appreciation for possession, angles, and the domination of space that this kind of football requires. And we also have players like Oussama, whose coachability and willingness to

learn are exceptional. With so many young players, that trait is invaluable – Talent develops, but coachability sustains growth.

Secondly, another massive trend is that of diagonality as a key component of successful (combination-centred) attacking sides. What role does diagonality play in your coaching?

The Role of Diagonality in My Coaching

RM: Diagonality, to me, represents the most intelligent connection between security and progression – what we call *“progress with less risk, or attack with security and control, with the chance to react”*

At Wydad, we had to rewire how the team perceived passing angles. The 0-0 draw against RS Berkane was the turning point. This probably was our best performance and a match we completely dominated. We controlled territory through angled circulation, finding the half-space diagonally rather than playing into congested vertical channels. The players showed incredible signs that they had now begun to understand that diagonality isn’t geometry – it’s timing, disguise, and perception. It took roughly five months of structured repetition and video learning before the automatisms became intuitive.

At Sundowns, diagonality became a language. Every pass carried both a forward and lateral component. The interactions between Ronza, Riva, Mokoena, Modiba, and Allende created that constant diagonal staircase, which disturbed the opponent on three axes at once. It was a relational orchestra – each angle prepared the next, each tilt reshaped the direction of our play.

An area that is perhaps most central

to the idea of diagonality is the half-spaces (the area between the wide and central channels on the field). What principles do you employ to use these areas effectively when attacking with your teams?

Using the Half-Spaces Effectively

RM: The half-spaces are the real laboratory of diagonality. They allow players to maintain a goal-facing orientation while keeping a panoramic field of view. At Sundowns, our 3-3-5 structure placed our two “free 8.5” or “free 10’s” like Mshishi or Neo, permanently in those channels – always on the half-turn, always positioned to break both horizontal and vertical lines in one movement. That’s why we could sustain possession and still progress with different ranges in Tempo.

At Wydad, we recreated this principle through narrower wingers and advanced full-backs. That allowed us to connect full-back > interior > striker along the diagonal axis, not linearly. Against Berkane, those half-space connections repeatedly freed our forwards between the lines; even when the finishing lacked precision, the principle was clearly visible. The two big chances for Sakhi and Zemraoui are great examples of this.

At MC Alger, our approach is more developmental. Players like Oussama, Benkhemassa, and Tabti help us build the structure, but we still train perception. Every week, we rehearse controlled tactical games where the first pass must open diagonally into the half-space, and the next must break the line of its own reception. This way, the team learns to think diagonally before acting vertically.

We will continue with Part 2 with Rulani Mokwena next week.





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