



‘PIRATES HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO WIN THE LEAGUE BUT..’



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BROOS REJECTED SAUDI FRIENDLY



MHANGO: I WANT ONE MORE DANCE AT AFCON



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ORBIT TO POUNCE ON ANOTHER EX-BAFANA DEFENDER?

ORBIT College are reportedly keen on adding further experience to their defence with the potential signing of Siyanda Xulu. The club quietly acquired the services of Ramahlwe Mphahlele last month, and sources have confirmed the 33-year-old Xulu could be next in line. With the club looking to retain their top-flight status, head coach Pogiso Makhoye has been scouring the free agent market for reinforcements.



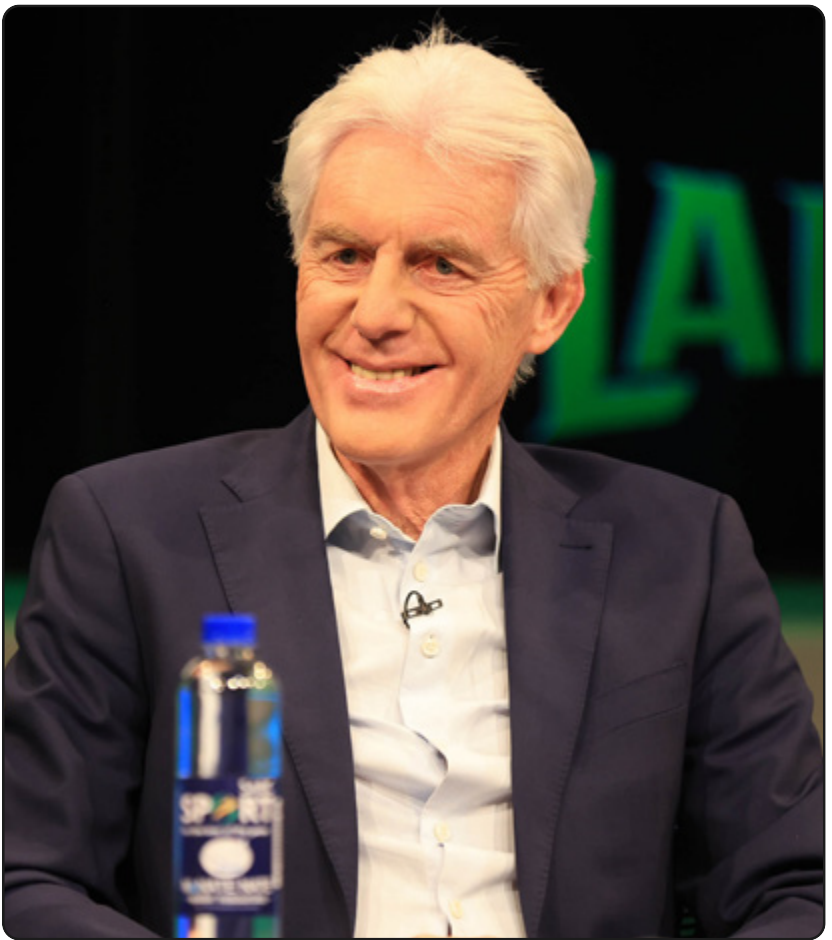
LETLHAKU INJURY FEARS ALLAYED

There have been concerns over promising Mamelodi Sundowns winger Kutlwano Lethlaku after images surfaced ahead of the Orlando Pirates clash of the player in a moon boot. The 19-year-old, who has been the subject of intense transfer speculation over the past six months, just returned from the FIFA U20 World Cup and was looking to build on his playing time at the South African giants. With four goals and seven assists in 27 first-team appearances, the teenager is viewed as an important member of the squad, and sources have confirmed it's 'not that serious' as it was just a case of a twisted ankle in training.



BROOS REJECTED SAUDI ARABIA PROPOSAL

Bafana Bafana head coach Hugo Broos is said to have opted not to accept an invitation for South Africa to take on Saudi Arabia in a warm-up friendly ahead of the Africa Cup of Nations in December. The Asian nation is believed to have sent an official invite for Bafana for a fixture in Riyadh this month, which has since been filled by Ivory Coast and Algeria on 14 and 18 November. South Africa will take on Zambia in their only fixture before the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations in Morocco, which has sparked question marks over the preparation for the tournament.



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GROUP STAGE DRAW 2025-26			
GROUP A	GROUP B	GROUP C	GROUP D
 RS BERKANE	 AL AHLY FC	 MAMELODI SUNDOWNS	 ES TUNIS
 PYRAMIDS FC	 YOUNG AFRICANS	 AL HILAL SC	 SIMBA SC
 RIVERS UNITED	 AS FAR	 MC ALGER	 ATLÉTICO PETRÓLEOS
 POWER DYNAMOS FC	 JS KABYLIE	 FC SAINT-ÉLOI LUPOPO	 STADE MALIEN

DOWNNS FACE RULANI & LUPOPO, TWO EGYPTIAN TRIPS FOR CHIEFS

Mamelodi Sundowns, Kaizer Chiefs, and Stellenbosch have learned their fate on the continental stage following Monday afternoon’s CAF Champions League and CAF Confederation Cup group stage draws, and there’s plenty to look forward to for South Africa’s remaining contenders.

Three of the four South African teams that entered CAF competition this season made it through the preliminary rounds, with only Orlando Pirates, last year’s CAFCL semi-finalists, bowing out in heartbreak after a dramatic penalty shootout defeat to DRC champions St Eloi Lupopo.

For Stellenbosch and Kaizer Chiefs, however, the journey continues. Both clubs successfully booked their places in the CAF Confederation Cup group stages, joining Sundowns, who once again lead the charge in the Champions League.

Stellenbosch, last year’s surprise semi-finalists, were drawn into a fascinating Group C, where they’ll meet AS Otoho of Congo, Tanzania’s Singida Black Stars, and Algerian giants CR Belouizdad, now coached by familiar face Sead Ramovic, formerly of TS Galaxy. It’s uncharted territory for Steve Barker’s side, who have never faced any of their group opponents before, but that may work to their advantage.

Kaizer Chiefs, meanwhile, will have a far more familiar path in Group D, squaring off against Zesco United of Zambia and Egyptian duo Al Masry and Zamalek. Chiefs last met Zesco in 2019, losing both games, while their encounters with Zamalek go back over three decades, with each side boasting a victory apiece.

2024/25 CAF Champions League runners-up Mamelodi Sundowns have been handed a tantalising Group C draw and will square off against Sudanese powerhouse Al Hilal, Algerian giants MC Alger, and DR Congo’s St Eloi Lupopo, the very team that sensationally dumped Pirates out in the previous round.

Adding an extra layer of intrigue, MC Alger are now led by none other than Rulani Mokwena, the former Sundowns head coach. His reunion with his old club promises to be one of the group stage’s most fascinating subplots, as Miguel Cardoso’s men look to assert their dominance and take one step closer to reclaiming continental glory.

With Sundowns aiming to reclaim continental dominance, and Chiefs and Stellies carrying South Africa’s hopes in the Confed Cup, the stage is set for another thrilling chapter in Mzansi’s African adventure.

2025-2026 GROUP STAGE DRAW			
GROUP A	GROUP B	GROUP C	GROUP D
 USM ALGER	 WYDAD AC	 CR BELOUZDAD	 ZAMALEK SC
 DJOLIBA AC	 AS MANIEMA UNION	 STELLENBOSCH FC	 AL MASRY SC
 OLYMPIC CLUB SAFI	 AZAM FC	 AS OTOHÓ	 KAIZER CHIEFS FC
 FC SAN PEDRO	 NAIROBI UNITED FC	 SINGIDA BLACK STARS	 ZESCO UNITED FC

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JUNIOR KHANYE: THE COACHES MADE THE DIFFERENCE

The highlight of the weekend was the big Betway Premiership clash between Mamelodi Sundowns and Orlando Pirates, but in the end there was no winner as the match ended 1-1, with a share of the spoils.

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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‘Dansin Is A Testament To Good Development’

“What a fascinating game of football.

“Two big teams in South African football. I think the difference today was the two coaches.

“Abdeslam Ouaddou vs Miguel Cardoso. Ouaddou appears to understand his players better than Cardoso.

“Ouaddou and Pirates’ game plan was to allow Sundowns to have all the possession and hit them hard on the counter.

“Mamelodi Sundowns had the ball, but they did not hurt Orlando Pirates. They did not take shots at goal. Pirates were disciplined; they sacrificed the ball and counter-attacked.

“Well done to Cemran Dansin. He is a testament to good development. What a goal he scored! What a goal!

“If you are properly developed, you find it easy to settle into professional football. Today proved exactly that.

“All in all, it was not the best of games because the teams were respectful of each other.”

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CHASING PIRATES' RECORD & A RETURN TO BAFANA

TSHEGOFATSO MABASA recently edged ever so close to becoming Orlando Pirates' all-time high scorer in the Premier Soccer League era when he notched up his 50th goal for the Buccaneers. He is now just eight goals shy of equaling the record held by the legendary Benedict 'Tso' Vilakazi. For a player who has been in and out of the club, a player who has never really enjoyed a lot of game-time, given that he

has been used sparingly over the years, the return is remarkable. And you wonder just how many goals he would have scored had he been consistently at the club without those loan spells and being used regularly by the coaches. iDiski Senior Soccer writer **MATSHELANE MAMABOLO** caught up with the soft-spoken striker who literally wears his beliefs on his sleeve – Mabasa adorns his write with a band emblazoned with the Christian Bible verse *Philippians 4:13* – to find out about his feelings about the impending record, his Bafana Bafana ambitions and his club football goals, among many other things.

MATSHELANE MAMABOLO: Ola Tshego, thank you so much for making time for me. Congratulations are in order for that 50th goal. It must be a great feeling to be so close to achieving the goal you openly said you were looking to get when the season began?

TSHEGOFATSO MABASA: Ola Grootman. Ja, hey, I appreciate the well wishes. For me, it really means a lot to have scored 50 goals for Pirates. This is a club I grew up supporting and dreaming to play for. So to achieve such a huge milestone is the stuff of realised dreams. And it really shows that if you believe, have the discipline to work hard and pray for what you'd like to get, you will achieve it. I hope that this tells the young players out there that their dreams are valid.

MM: You are yet to get the record, but 50 goals – that's massive. How did it feel to get that goal, and what has been the reaction from the people around you?

TM: It is very special, and my family is very proud of me, and I know I would not have gotten this far without their undying support. Hopefully, I can continue scoring and get that record.

MM: Logic suggests you will. I mean, you got to 50 despite having been in and out of the club. You'd surely have long surpassed Tso had you stayed at Pirates all along.

TM: Ja maybe. But I look at what happened – going out on those loans to Sekhukhune United and then to Swallows – as part of the journey that God has set out for me. It might have seemed to some that I was not good enough for Pirates, but I went to those clubs and did well.

MM: It had to have hurt, though. After all, there you were, finally getting to play for the team of your dreams, and then you got sent out on loan.

TM: Ja eish, Grootman, the first one really hurt me. We were just coming off

"IT REALLY MEANS A LOT TO HAVE SCORED 50 GOALS FOR PIRATES. THIS IS A CLUB I GREW UP SUPPORTING AND DREAMING TO PLAY FOR."





a great season, having reached the final of the Confederation Cup, in which we lost to RS Berkane. I felt I'd made a good contribution to that achievement, and I'd even scored a lot of goals that season and then you get told you must go on loan. It was not easy. But what could I have done.

MM: How did you cope with that setback?

TM: I owe it to my family to have managed to deal with it. Without their support, I would not have made it this far. They were there for me, and they kept me going with words of encouragement. They reminded me of the dreams I had as a youngster, of wanting to be a top player, and how I would always tell them I want to be one of the top scorers in South Africa. So for me, the loan spell turned out to be a kick in the backside that drove me to keep on pursuing my dreams.

MM: You were at an unheralded Sekhukhune from the heights of playing for the Buccaneers. That could not have been easy.

TM: It wasn't for sure. But the biggest take out from there for me was that my mental strength shot up. I grew up as a human being from playing there. There were just a lot of things I learnt that were not football-related, which made me a stronger man. There were many challenges that could have affected my football, but I learnt to put those aside and focused on my game. That really helped make me stronger. On the football side, it was fantastic to reach the Nedbank Cup final with them, and we played against Pirates even though we lost.

MM: You then went on yet another loan spell at the beginning of the next season. This time to Swallows...

TM: Ja, that one also came after I'd had a fantastic tournament in the COSAFA

“I STILL BELIEVE MY CHANCE WILL COME, THOUGH. I AM INSPIRED BY THE EXAMPLE OF SIPHO MBULE, WHO HAS MADE IT BACK INTO THE SQUAD.”

Cup, where I was the top scorer. Swallows came knocking, and Pirates felt I should go there on loan. I had a great time at Swallows, even though the club had a lot of administrative issues that season. It was great for me because I got to reunite with Coach Steve [Komphela, who coached him when he started out in the professional ranks at Bloemfontein Celtic], and also, there was Musa [Nyatama, his former teammate turned coach]. I did well there and scored a lot of goals until I had to go back to Pirates before the end of the campaign. It was a good season.

MM: For all your hard work and consistency at the club level, the national team call-up is just not really happening, though. Why do you think that is?

TM: It is very painful because I generally make the preliminary squads, but I am just unfortunate never to make the cut for the final one. I still believe my chance will come, though. I am inspired by the example of Siphso Mbule, who has made it back into the squad.

MM: The Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) coming up must be on your radar.

TM: It is definitely a dream. I grew up watching the tournament, and I have a memory of watching Benni McCarthy doing his thing, and it made me want to be a part of that one day. I am





hopeful, and I know it will happen if I keep on doing my work at the club. I learnt from my time at Sekhukhune to be patient and wait for my chance. I look at Evidence [Makgopa] and I realise that if you work diligently, the selectors will eventually recognise you.

MM: Switching to the domestic game, the Betway Premiership title looks up for grabs with Mamelodi Sundowns seemingly not as strong as in previous seasons. Do Pirates have what it takes to win it this time? What role would you like to play to help the team capture the title?

TM: Yes, we definitely do have what it takes to win it because of the quality of the squad we have. But it’s also up to us to show that consistently throughout the season.

MM: A lot of people doubted Coach Abdeslam Ouaddou at the beginning, but they like him now. What is it about him that makes him a good coach for you personally?

TM: It was never going to be easy for a coach to come into such a demanding environment and especially when the team had done so well in the previous season, but Coach Ouaddou has shown great courage and character to lead the team. What makes him special is the way he demands from his players and his hunger for success.

MM: The golden boot, are you thinking about winning it this season...

TM: For me personally, this season is for the club to win every competition we are competing in. God willing, if the golden boot comes with that, I would be very happy.

MM: Tell me a little bit about the players who inspired you and the ones you modelled your play on.

TM: A player who inspired me was Ronaldo [R9]. I mean, what he managed to do on the field of play was really special. A player I try to model my game

“THIS SEASON IS FOR THE CLUB TO WIN EVERY COMPETITION WE ARE COMPETING IN, GOD WILLING, IF THE GOLDEN BOOT COMES WITH THAT, I WOULD BE VERY HAPPY.”

around would be Harry Kane, simply because of his all-around play and his killer instincts in front of goal.

MM: What do you do when you are not playing football?

TM: I spend time with family because they have played such a huge role not only in my career but my life. They know every single thing about me, and nothing makes me happier than being with family.

MM: Had you not become a professional footballer, what career would you have taken up?

TM: I think it would’ve been something in sport. I LOVE sport and it’s a big part of my life.

MM: Do you still have the Philippians 4:13 verse on the wristband you wear on match days... or are you using a different one? Please tell me a little about what the verse means for you.

TM: Yes. I am still using the verse, and I don’t think it will ever change. It’s one of the first Bible verses I read, and it spoke to me during that time, and I’ve held on to it throughout my career. It keeps me going.

MM: Keep on going, Tshego. Thank you for your time.





NDAMANE ON CHIEFS EXIT, BAFANA DEBUT & LATEST RUMOURS

By Matshelane Mamabolo

There is calmness to Khulumani Ndamane that belies his age. It's the kind of composure you expect from a player who has been in the professional game for a decade, not someone who only made his senior debut a short while ago.

Yet, here he is – barely out of his teens – already having worn the Bafana Bafana jersey and showing the kind of maturity that is making his name one of the most talked about among South Africa’s new generation of defenders.

The 21-year-old TS Galaxy centre-back has enjoyed a meteoric rise, one that even he admits caught him by surprise.

“I am very happy with my progress,” he says, the humility in his tone immediately apparent.

“I haven’t played a lot of seasons, but where I am now shows that I’m working very hard. Things are going well, and I’m happy where I am.”

In a football environment often filled with inflated egos and premature hype, Ndamane’s groundedness stands out. For him, the progress is not just a reflection of talent – it’s a product of work ethic, discipline, and a willingness to learn.

Ndamane hails from Sahlumbe, a small village near Ladysmith in KwaZulu-Natal – an area better known for its rich choral music traditions than for producing professional footballers. But like many young boys growing up in rural South Africa, he was captivated

“THERE ARE A LOT OF PLAYERS IN THIS GAME, AND IF YOU DON’T GET A CHANCE, YOU MUST ACCEPT IT. FOOTBALL DOESN’T ALWAYS TAKE YOU WHERE YOU WANT TO GO.”

early by the magic of the game.

“I grew up loving soccer and dreaming that one day I’d play for Bafana Bafana,” he says.

“Of course, I knew that there were many players and that the competition for national team places is tough. But I always saw myself getting there one day.”

The journey began modestly – with dusty fields, makeshift goalposts, and unrelenting passion. Opportunities were scarce, but when a local football enthusiast, Mbuso Dlamini, noticed his talent, things began to change.

“Mbuso used to take me to trials in Richards Bay because he had a car,” Ndamane recalls. “He helped me a lot. Without him, I might not have made it here.”

Those trips eventually led him to Kaizer Chiefs, where he impressed enough to earn a place in the Under-19 setup and later in the DStv Diski Challenge (DDC) team. For a boy from the village, it was validation that the dream was

real.

When the time came for Chiefs to promote players to their senior team, Ndamane wasn't among those chosen. For many youngsters, that's where the story would have ended. But for him, it was just the beginning.

"It was not painful," he admits. "There are a lot of players in this game, and if you don't get a chance, you must accept it. Football doesn't always take you where you want to go."

It's a statement that perfectly sums up Ndamane's approach to life – realistic, resilient, and forward-looking.

"I saw that things were not happening the way I wished, so I decided to come to TS Galaxy. And fortunately, when I arrived here, things went my way."

What seemed like rejection quickly turned into re-direction really. Galaxy has become known as a club that gives young players room to grow. For Ndamane, it was the ideal environment.

"At teams like Chiefs, expectations are huge," he says. "As a youngster, you still make mistakes, and sometimes the pressure can be too much. But here at Galaxy, they allow you to make mistakes and learn. That has helped me grow – not just as a player, but mentally too."

The turning point in his career came when Bafana Bafana coach Hugo Broos included him in the national team setup. The Belgian tactician has often spoken about his preference for hard-working, fearless players – attributes that Ndamane embodies.

"The coach doesn't look at which club you play for," he says appreciatively. "He believes in players who work hard. That's encouraging for some of us who play for teams like Galaxy."

However, his first taste of the international stage came with a dose of frustration. Ndamane didn't have a passport ready and thus missed out on travelling with the national team for his debut call-up.

"Things happened too fast," he says with a sheepish grin. "I was just happy playing in the PSL; the national team wasn't even on my mind and that's why I didn't even have a passport. I learnt from that mistake, though. Now, I have my passport ready!"

When his second opportunity came, he made sure to grab it with both hands. And once on the pitch, he looked anything but a novice.

He was in that team which smashed Rwanda 3-0 to earn South Africa



"AT TEAMS LIKE CHIEFS, EXPECTATIONS ARE HUGE. AS A YOUNGSTER, YOU STILL MAKE MISTAKES, AND SOMETIMES THE PRESSURE CAN BE TOO MUCH. BUT HERE AT GALAXY, THEY ALLOW YOU TO MAKE MISTAKES AND LEARN."

qualification for next year's FIFA World Cup to be hosted by all of Canada, Mexico and the United States of America.

"I just told myself to keep pushing the way I had been pushing at Galaxy," he explains.

"When I got into camp, the senior players like Nkosinathi Sibisi and Ronwen Williams told me not to be afraid and to play my game because I was not there by mistake."

That reassurance paid off. Ndamane delivered a steady, calm and assured performance as South Africa kept a clean sheet – the kind of showing that quietly announces a player's arrival at the top level.

In an era where defenders are increasingly expected to do more than just clear the ball, Ndamane represents a new breed – comfortable on the ball, composed under pressure, and tactically disciplined.

He credits his maturity to his understanding of what the modern



game demands.

“For me, it’s about listening to what the coach tells you and doing it,” he says. “I believe that’s what has placed me where I am.”

That humility extends to his interactions on the field. He doesn’t shout, he doesn’t showboat – but he commands respect. Whether it’s reading the game, making timely interceptions, or initiating attacks from the back, his influence at Galaxy has been steadily growing.

For a player in his early 20s, his positional awareness and ability to adapt to different tactical systems are impressive. His composure when faced with high-pressure situations – often against more experienced attackers – speaks volumes about his football intelligence.

On how he manages the growing attention, especially after breaking into the national team and with talks of big clubs such as Mamelodi Sundowns being after his signature, Ndamane shrugs it off with characteristic modesty.

“Mine is just to play,” he says. “People will talk, but I don’t know if I’m joining any other club. I just want to play and let God make things happen in His time.”

It’s an answer that might frustrate headline writers but delights managers – a player focused purely on his football.

Still, he knows what it means to be in the public eye.

“At home, they’re very happy for me,” he says with a smile. “I used to trouble them, saying I want to go play soccer

“WHEN I GOT INTO CAMP, THE SENIOR PLAYERS LIKE NKOSINATHI SIBISI AND RONWEN WILLIAMS TOLD ME NOT TO BE AFRAID AND TO PLAY MY GAME.”

– now they can see what I was talking about.”

His story has become a source of pride for Sahlumbe. In a region where professional opportunities are rare, Ndamane’s success has become a beacon for aspiring youngsters.

“It’s nice to have people celebrate me for doing something good,” he says. “I’ve managed to take our village’s name and put it up there.”

Behind his steady demeanour lies a personal story that adds depth to his journey. His father, who shared his love for Kaizer Chiefs, passed away before he could witness his son’s professional breakthrough.

“It’s painful,” Ndamane admits softly. “I would have loved for him to see me make it and to make him proud while he was alive. But I believe he is a great ancestor for me now.”

He still carries that bond every time he steps onto the pitch.

“I supported Chiefs because my dad supported Chiefs,” he says. “Every time I play, I think about him.”

Today, he lives with his grandmother, who remains a central figure in his life.

“Things were hard growing up, and they’re still hard,” he says. “But God has given me the opportunity to work, and I will continue to help at home.”

Like many young players who dedicate their early years to football, education took a backseat for Ndamane.

“I finished Grade 11,” he says. “It’s just that my love for soccer took over. I never had dreams of being a lawyer or a doctor – I just wanted to play.”

Now that he’s achieved his dream of turning professional, he’s reflecting on the importance of completing his schooling. ‘

“I think I might go back and finish my matric,” he says. “It’s something I want to do for myself.”

It’s another sign of the maturity that has defined his journey – a player aware that football can be fleeting, and that balance matters.

Having already tasted international football, Ndamane is eager for more. But he understands that selection for major tournaments such as the Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) is no guarantee.

“The final team is in the coach’s hands,” he says diplomatically. “My job is to keep pushing and doing what got me noticed in the first place.”

He’s realistic about his position but confident in his abilities.

“Playing alongside senior players and keeping a clean sheet in my debut gives me belief,” he says.

“Now it’s about consistency.”

And consistency is something Ndamane has shown in abundance at TS Galaxy where he’s become one of the key figures in Adnan Berganovic’s well-drilled defensive unit.

If his current trajectory continues, it’s only a matter of time before bigger clubs – perhaps even those abroad – start circling. Yet, Ndamane remains focused on the present.

“I’m not in a rush,” he says. “I believe everything happens when it’s meant to. I’m just focusing on improving and helping my team.”

It’s a measured approach that mirrors the very qualities that make him so effective on the pitch – patience, timing, and clarity.

In a national team that’s rebuilding its defensive identity, players like Khulumani Ndamane represent the future. He’s young, adaptable, and



“I SUPPORTED CHIEFS BECAUSE MY DAD SUPPORTED CHIEFS. EVERY TIME I PLAY, I THINK ABOUT HIM.”

grounded – a combination that makes him invaluable in a system that demands both athleticism and tactical intelligence.

He’s already shown he can handle pressure, whether it’s in the PSL or wearing the national badge.

His story – from the remote fields of Sahlumbe to the international stage – is one that underscores the importance of perseverance and opportunity in South African football.

So what is it that drives Ndamane?

His answer is as simple as it is profound: “I just love the game. I want to keep improving. Everything else will follow.”

And in those words lies the essence of Khulumani Ndamane – the quiet leader, the student of the game, and the defender who plays with the heart of a seasoned pro.

He may not seek the spotlight, but if his trajectory continues, it will find him – whether in the PSL, in continental competitions, or mid next year, perhaps, on the grandest stage of all – the FIFA World Cup ticket to which he helped South Africa earn for the first time in 24 years.



‘BESIDES WHAT PEOPLE SAY ABOUT ME, CHAIRMAN BELIEVES IN ME’

After nearly 12 years and eight clubs in South African football, veteran striker GABADINHO MHANGO reflects on his influential career, including his memorable 2022 AFCON run with Malawi. He also expressed his strong desire to win the cup and cap off his tenure with the Natal Rich Boyz with major silverware. Richards Bay, interestingly, takes on his former club, Orlando Pirates, in the Carling Knockout semi-final this Saturday.

Sinethemba Sithole: Gaba, thanks for sitting down with us. You’re four months into your time with Richards Bay—how has the adjustment been at your new club?

Gabadinho Mhango: Thank you so much for this opportunity again to speak with you. Having a new club is amazing; it’s a new chapter for me, a new place. I’d say I’m adapting and I’m really enjoying myself at the moment. Richards Bay is a very peaceful place, quiet and nice. I’m just enjoying to be here.

SS: The chairman spoke highly of you during the club’s welcome to the city, stating you were brought in specifically for goals and team improvement. How does that level of trust and expectation weigh on you as you start this new chapter?

GM: I think first of all, I’d say thanks to the chairman for giving me an opportunity. Besides what people say about me outside but the chairman believed in me and my team, the technical team and everybody. I think for me, I love the game, I’ve been in the game for too long, I’ve been in this game for too long, I think 11 to 12 years now. I think for me, my job is to score goals every time when I can. So, that’s why the chairman sees that, and he gave me an opportunity, perhaps he saw that I’m capable of doing the same. So, I’m just grateful for this opportunity again.

SS: You have scored two goals in 11

appearances you have made across all competitions so far this season. How do you feel about your impact? Do you feel there’s still so much you can do or perhaps you’re content with what you’ve done?

GM: Nothing is good until the team is all good. For me, the most important thing is that the team comes first. As a player, you need to respect the badge. As much as I don’t have the [big] number of goals, I have two goals. But I think there’s more we can do as a team and also as individual players. Of course, as individual players, you have a goal which is at the end of the season, you want to see yourself in the top goal-scorer list, you want to compete for the PSL top goal-scorers of all time. So, I think that’s that at the moment, and that’s what I can say for now.

SS: Do you picture yourself winning a trophy with this team? I know they have previously reached the Carling Knockout semi-final twice and you’re in another one against Orlando Pirates this upcoming week, I’m sure you’d like to go further.

GM: At the end of the day, every team is fighting for the final because you must remember that final comes perhaps once a year. So, for us as players, it’s a motivation because at the end of the day, when you leave the team and when you’re somewhere else, you want to leave a mark to say I was part of that team, I was part of the team that won the [Carling] Knockout or the league or something. So, it’s good for the players to leave a mark behind because people will remember you for that. They will remember that you were this and that, but if you win a cup, you will be in those boards to say you were part of the team that won the trophy. The team also has young players, and we, as old players, we encourage them so we can taste some things like finals, because it’s a good feeling.



SS: I know surely you always want to do better than what you deliver as a player, but you’re one of the few players who knows how to be consistent. How do you maintain that, considering you have moved so much and have played for eight clubs already in SA?

GM: First thing is comfortability where you play and the players that you work with. First thing when I come to the place, I adapt to the culture of the place. Secondly, I need to get to know the players that I play with, that’s key. Most of the players are not consistent because they are shy whenever they are in a new place, they end up not playing their football and not playing to their full potential. In that way, you become scared. So, for me, I’m not scared, but obviously at the beginning of my [career in South Africa], I used to be scared, but now I’m no longer because I’ve been here for too long. I feel at home, and I have people that I engage with. That’s the key.

SS: Is there a stint you’d kind of pinpoint and say this is where you really enjoyed your football more in the career that you’ve had in South Africa?

GM: For me to enjoy football, I have to be on the pitch, everywhere I go. I can’t say this team or that team I enjoyed more. There are a lot of teams I’ve played for, including [Bidvest Wits] where I won trophies for the first time as a player, to win the league title. Actually, in the history of Malawi, being the first player to win the league title outside the country. I think I can also highlight that in my career. But as long as I’m on the pitch, that’s where I say I enjoy.

SS: You have played for eight clubs in the PSL within the 12 years that you have spent here. Doesn’t moving from club to club in a short period of time affect you as a player?

GM: It does affect you, but you have to

“AT THE BEGINNING OF MY [CAREER IN SOUTH AFRICA], I USED TO BE SCARED, BUT NOW I’M NO LONGER BECAUSE I’VE BEEN HERE FOR TOO LONG. I FEEL AT HOME.”

accept it because it’s a job for us. But moving from place to place also shows how you can adapt to the cultures of different people. Our job is to travel a lot; we don’t sit at home. That’s why I say everywhere you go, you must try and make it feel like home, no matter what. So, now Bay is my home because we’re moving, we’re soccer players, we have no choices.

SS: Which defenders in SA football would you point to and say they have given you problems since you started playing in this country?

GM: There’s a lot of defenders that have troubled me. Some have retired, some give me a tough time even in training. I’d say people like Happy Jele, Bevan Fransman, Musa Bilankulu, Tefu Mashamaite and Morgan Gould. There’s a lot of players that have given me a tough time, but at the end of the day, it’s football; you have to face challenges. But I think I also enjoy challenges; the more you become tougher, the more you grow, and you get to know this is how I approach the game. There’s more players than those I mentioned that have given me a tough time. I think them challenging me has made me to grow because if it was easy, when you get things easier, it’s easy to let them go, but if you get them hard, you keep them for too long.



SS: Let's move to the national team, you've previously enjoyed yourself a lot whenever Malawi were taking part in AFCON. This time around, you won't be there. What can be done in your country so you can be consistent in qualifying for the major competitions consistently?

GM: I think the first thing, most of us, we are scared when we are playing the likes of Morocco, Algeria or Ghana. It's nice games to play and enjoy because you play with players that don't know you but you know them, and you watch them. But this side, most of us down in Africa, before you play the game, you're scared and you've already lost it before you play. It happens even here in the PSL: people lose the game before they play. They say, 'We're playing Pirates this week, yoooo!'. They get motivated but at the same time scared; they have lost the game because of the name of the opponents. When you play big teams, you become more mature because it's a game where you don't have to be shy, and you must enjoy yourself. With [2022] AFCON, I enjoyed it; that was my best moment. It was also the time that Malawi qualified for the knockout stages for the first time. I had fun, but before I retire, I want one more dance of AFCON, and we can push each other in the country.

“YOU WANT TO LEAVE A MARK TO SAY I WAS PART OF THAT TEAM, I WAS PART OF THE TEAM THAT WON THE [CARLING] KNOCKOUT OR THE LEAGUE OR SOMETHING.”

SS: How do you feel about the standard of football in your country?

GM: There's talent, but most football isn't televised, and it's a matter of getting opportunities to come to South Africa, but they are not watching that kind of football. I even remember when I came here, they didn't know me, and that's why I had to make people know me. But there are players who go overseas, like in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, America and Zimbabwe. It's a good thing because when you play there, the level is high.

SS: Thanks for the chat.



CLIFFORD PLAYS DOWN SOWETO GIANT SLAYER TAG

Having spent almost a decade playing in Europe, striker JAISEN CLIFFORD is back home and enjoying an impressive start to the 2025/26 Betway Premiership season with Marumo Gallants. The 29-year-old former SuperSport United youth player has already scored against the Soweto giants Orlando Pirates and Kaizer Chiefs, in the league. He talks frankly with iDiski Times writer LETHABO KGANYAGO in this edition about how good they felt, including having no shame about his missed penalty against Mamelodi Sundowns in the Last 16 round of the Carling Knockout Cup, where his side eventually prevailed. Clifford also talks about his time overseas, how the leagues in East Europe tend to be underestimated because of not being broadcast in South Africa, what he learned there, his reasons for coming back home, how he believes Bahlabane Ba Ntwa is a top-half team and working with coach Alexandre Lafitte, among other things.

Lethabo Kganyago: Jaisen, we appreciate your time. Just to start, how has it been playing in the Premiership in South Africa?

Jaisen Clifford: It’s really nice playing back home, playing in the Premier [Soccer] League, it’s enjoyable. I’m really enjoying it so far.

LK: Are you noticing any difference from your time with Cape Town All Stars, even though it was in a different division?

JC: Look, I think obviously, All Stars at the time, they were in the NFD, it’s a huge difference compared to what’s happening now in terms of just the basic things, in terms of the professionalism of the clubs, the seriousness of the clubs and obviously the ambitions. So I can’t compare, really. I mean, All Stars, it took them six months to get my ITC from Europe. Obviously, the football in South Africa has grown. It’s a nice level. There’s a huge gap between, let’s say, some

teams and the rest of the league. That’s what I do, see immediately, in terms of on the field, tactically and those kinds of things. There’s a big space where there are certain teams that you think could play in bigger leagues, where the other teams that are okay, you know, at a little bit of a lower level. But so far, I mean, the football setup has really grown, and ja, it’s enjoyable.

LK: And where is your club, Marumo on that scale? If you look at the qualities and challenges, where does it rate on that scale?

JC: (Chuckles) Of course, I’m biased to answer this question. Obviously, I train with the guys every single day. I know the level of our team. I can see our quality, honestly, and I’ve said it before as well. We have a really quality team, a really good team, the good mix of experienced players and younger players that are very ambitious. So I honestly think that it’s not impossible for me to say that, yeah, we can challenge in this division. I think also, we’ve shown that we can fight above our weight, so to speak, and I think that we belong in the top half of the table, that’s for sure. But I could push it and say even higher, but ja, no pressure on the boys.

LK: No pressure on you. So let’s talk about going to Europe. How did it happen, because that’s where you spend most of your time playing?

JC: So when I was younger, still at SuperSport [United] Academy, we did a tour, we went to France, and I top goal-scored at the tournament, and there was an interested club from France at that time. So obviously, SuperSport didn’t allow it and didn’t go through. But I think since that moment, there was an imprint in the back of my mind that I want to go and test myself in that kind of space. So ja, about a couple of years later, I just matriculated, and I had the opportunity, a friend of mine had



went to Malta, a small country south of Italy, and he said, ‘Listen, there’s a chance here’. And obviously, at the time, it was hard for younger players to play in the division before the MDC [now DDC]. There was still the Monday league that was happening. So it was very hard for young players to break through into the PSL. So I thought that, okay, let me go and test the waters, and then see what can happen from this opportunity. And yeah, I did, then I ended up staying that side for that long.

LK: You look at the countries that you went to, not very fancied in terms of football, but what were the lessons you drew from that and playing in those kinds of countries?

JC: It’s not like the Englands and the more western part of Europe. I think that also people in South Africa tend to underestimate the strength of the divisions that are in the east of Europe as well. And I think that also comes down to the fact that it’s not broadcast on TV in South Africa. But just because it’s not seen in South Africa, it doesn’t mean it’s not seen in the rest of the world, so to speak. The leagues and how can I say this... the teams in those parts of Europe, they’re highly competitive, and the strongest as well, also they’re quite well off financially. So for me to go there, you learn football at a different kind of, I don’t want to say level, but in a different space. In South Africa football, we tend to be very good players on the ball and those kinds of things but overseas, you learn a different side of football in terms of tactical positioning and the physicality in how they play. So I feel having that blend has actually helped me a lot, especially now when coming back to the PSL, being able to mix the two kinds of styles of football.

LK: And coming back home, how did you come to that decision?

JC: So I had a good season last season by God’s grace. I wasn’t sure about coming back home because there were a lot of opportunities for me overseas. But the main deciding factor is that about two years ago, I had a baby

“WE’VE SHOWN THAT WE CAN FIGHT ABOVE OUR WEIGHT SO TO SPEAK AND I THINK THAT WE BELONG IN THE TOP HALF OF THE TABLE.”

girl. So the logistics of having to move or relocate my family and having the said club do that for me was going to be a bit difficult. So that’s the reason we really were glad we’re pushing to come back to the PSL, and I think it was a good decision in terms of life in general, I’m much more happier.

LK: Marumo, were they the only ones that were interested in signing you because we’ve read that the Soweto teams also had an interest...

JC: (Chuckles) Yeah, I’m getting this question. So I can’t speak about any other club, obviously, I just know what the situation was. I heard about interests also via the media. I never really spoke with anyone. The conversation that I did have, or that I can really speak about, was once obviously I spoke with Dr [Abram] Sello, our Chairman, I knew that it just felt like the right project for what I was looking for at this particular moment. The interest was very tangible from Marumo, whereas, for example, something else wasn’t as tangible or as concrete, so to speak. And also, I appreciated the fact that they worked in a manner that I was really used to, as in they weren’t going to delay about any particular thing. So I felt that they showed a lot of faith in me and what they’ve seen or heard about me, and so it was only right to repay that faith. You know you feel better in that kind of environment.

LK: And what were you looking for? What is it an issue of, because there will not be so much pressure, because you’re only just coming



back after almost a decade?

JC: No, I'm not really the kind of person that's going to, I don't know, be scared of pressure, because I think that in football there is always pressure. It's always pressure, regardless of which team we see you play for. There's always the pressure to win and to perform. Each team has their own ambition. I think that helped in the sense that, okay, I do have time to adjust to the league and those kinds of things. I wasn't really after money, so to speak. The biggest factor was to be able to be in the country and have a place where I can enjoy my football, and that's the main thing for me. I'm a passionate player, so to speak, as in I thrive from that environment where you're obviously playing and you're enjoying yourself and in good company.

LK: You do look like you are enjoying yourself. I mean, you are back home scoring against Pirates and Chiefs, then you miss that penalty against Sundowns, let's talk about those experiences...

JC: (Laughs) Look, to be fair, there's no shame in me missing a penalty against Ronwen [Williams]. I think he's one of the best keepers in South Africa and obviously on the continent as well. No shame. It doesn't hit my confidence at all the fact that I've missed the penalty, because I've seen the [Lionel] Mesis and [Cristiano] Ronaldos, they have missed penalties, and they're much bigger players than me. So who am I to not miss a penalty (laughs). It was one of those things, and it was a good save. Obviously, there's a better moment scoring goals than missing the penalty.

LK: (Chuckles) It must have felt great to score against both Soweto giants.

JC: (Laughs) I think, to be fair, I enjoyed the one against Pirates more, I'm just saying. There was more weight there, three points, we won at home in front of our home supporters. So I enjoyed it.

LK: So are you taking the tag of being a Soweto Giant slayer?

JC: (Laughs) Not particularly. I mean, I'm just Jaisen. For me, playing any game is to score or to see how I can make my team score. So the same way that I'll prepare for Pirates, it's the same way I'll prepare for a team that we're playing, even if it's from the NFD or the Vodacom [league], it's the same mentality that I have. It is to score or to try and help the team score.

LK: A lot of strikers that I've spoken to are shy or modest about talking about their targets. Are you the kind that says it boldly that I'm aiming for this and that?

JC: Look, I'm not shy, but I want to score as many goals as I can score. I know I want to say I'm a humble person, but I also have an alter ego as a footballer. I do know I can score, and I'm going to score, and how many [goals] is up to God.



"I THINK THAT ALSO PEOPLE IN SOUTH AFRICA TEND TO UNDERESTIMATE THE STRENGTH OF THE DIVISIONS THAT ARE IN THE EAST OF EUROPE."

LK: And how is it working with coach Alex? I think a lot has been said about his age, that he's young. How is it for you guys who are there working with him?

JC: Coach Alex is good. I think he's got a lot of how can I say... tactical and football knowledge. If you've noticed, against some of the teams, they are already struggling to play against us because of the way that he set the team up. So I think that it's really easy, he pushes hard, and he expects a lot.

LK: You guys are still in the Carling Cup, and you've also spoken about this team being capable of being in the top half in the league table. Can you guys go all the way in the cup?

JC: No one plays in these cup competitions to lose them. So we want to win the cup, I think there's no shame in me saying that. We do think that we can go all the way. We really believe it and also think that with us now in the bottom half, it's also just about a few points different. So we take it game by game, and obviously, we want to move up into the top half of the table.

LK: And lastly, Jason, what would make you a happy man when this season comes to a conclusion?

JC: I don't know, but my Mom thinks I'm the best, and that makes me happy (laughs). I'm happy.

LK: I'm sure Mom is also happy to have you back home.

JC: It's the first time that they've been able to watch me for about 10 years. They were in the stands against Chiefs as well. So yeah, the first game that they've been able to see of me for a long time.

LK: That is so nice and so heart-warming and a wonderful way to end our conversation. Jaisen, thank you so much and all the best.





THE POSTMAN AND HIS CHALLENGERS

With the countdown ticking — less than 37 days to the start of the CAF Africa Cup of Nations in Morocco, and just over 200 days until the FIFA World Cup in the USA, Mexico, and Canada — the excitement around Bafana Bafana is building fast. As preparations ramp up, iDiski Times will be diving deep into each position on the pitch, analysing the frontrunners, the fringe players, and the rising stars, hoping to catch Hugo Broos’ eye for these two monumental tournaments.

We kick off with the LEFT-BACK position, one of the more settled yet quietly

competitive roles in Broos’ setup. For much of his tenure, Aubrey Modiba has been the dependable, natural first choice: calm under pressure, composed on the ball, and tactically intelligent. But in his absence, others have been asked to step in and stake their claim, sparking an ongoing contest for the backup role. Now, as Broos looks to finalise his squad for the road to Morocco and beyond, the question remains: who will stand beside Modiba as South Africa’s best options on the left flank?

The Man In Possession:

Aubrey Modiba
(Mamelodi Sundowns)

It’s hard to believe Aubrey Modiba is now one of the veterans in the Bafana Bafana setup, a quiet reminder of just how fast time moves in football. It truly feels like only yesterday that the versatile left-footer was turning out for Amajita and the U23s, or making his professional debut as a bright-eyed youngster at Mpumalanga Black Aces. From there, he took the scenic route through Cape Town City, where he made a brief but promising stop, before truly finding his stride at SuperSport United, and eventually cementing himself as a cornerstone of the Mamelodi Sundowns machine.

What’s perhaps surprising is that for all his consistency and quality, that long-anticipated overseas move, once considered almost inevitable, never quite materialised. European clubs had been tracking “The Postman” from early in his career, drawn by his intelligence, delivery and composure under pressure. Yet, local powerhouses were always a step quicker to secure his services, and South African football has been richer for it.

Now 30 years old, Modiba still has plenty left in the tank; his work rate, adaptability, and professionalism ensure





that. A future move abroad might not be completely off the table, but for now, his focus remains on delivering for Sundowns and Bafana. He's likely to keep his place as Hugo Broos' first-choice left-back for the foreseeable future, and with the 2026 FIFA World Cup on the horizon, this could well be his golden opportunity to shine on football's biggest stage, the perfect chapter in a career that has quietly embodied endurance, evolution, and excellence.

The Back-Ups:

Samukelo Kabini (Molde FK, Norway)

It's been a whirlwind year for Samukelo Kabini, the former TS Galaxy defender who has gone from promising local talent to one of South African football's most exciting exports. At just 21 years old, Kabini is already showing signs that he could be not only a capable understudy to Aubrey Modiba, but perhaps his natural heir in the years to come.

His journey has been fast, fearless, and full of promise. After honing his craft in the Orlando Pirates youth system and cutting his professional teeth at Galaxy, Kabini made the bold decision to take his talents to Scandinavia earlier this year, a move that has already started to pay off. The adaptation to European football is never easy, but Kabini has embraced the challenge with a maturity beyond his years. For South African fans, his progress abroad is both exciting and encouraging. Left-back is a position where depth has often been a concern in the past, and Kabini's rise offers real hope for the future. The question now is not whether the KwaNdebele-born player will make the step up to Bafana Bafana, but when. With experience in Europe sharpening his defensive instincts and tactical awareness, it feels only a matter of time before he becomes a fixture in Hugo Broos' plans.

If Modiba has been the reliable present, Kabini might just be the fearless future, a player with the potential to carry the torch into the next generation of South African football.

Fawaaz Basadien (Mamelodi Sundowns)

Basadien's story is a reminder of how quickly fortunes can shift in football. Just a season ago, the versatile full-back looked to have firmly established himself in Broos' Bafana setup, his form at Stellenbosch FC earning him widespread praise and a reputation as one of the most consistent defenders in the Betway Premiership.

Then came the big move, a deserved transfer to Mamelodi Sundowns, the dream destination for any South African footballer looking to test himself among the best. But, as is often the case at Chloorkop, breaking into that starting XI is no easy task. Surrounded by established stars

and fierce internal competition, Basadien has found regular minutes harder to come by, and when he does feature, it's not always in his preferred position. The move that was meant to propel his career to new heights has, ironically, placed his international prospects in jeopardy.

At the same time, Kabini's rise in Norway has added another twist to the tale. The young left-back's emergence offers Broos an exciting alternative for the future, while Modiba, both at club and national level, continues to stand as the seasoned first choice. For Basadien, it's an uphill climb, battling Modiba for a place at Sundowns, and indirectly competing with him for a spot in Bafana's squad. Yet, Basadien brings something different to the table. He's more than just a defender; he's a leader on the field, composed, and technically assured. His set-piece skills and ability to drive attacks from deep could give him an edge. Those qualities could still make him a valuable asset for both club and country, if he can get back to playing regularly.



With the AFCON in Morocco fast approaching, time might be running out for him to make that squad, but the 2026 World Cup remains a real possibility. If Basadien can rediscover his rhythm and force his way into the Sundowns line-up, his story could yet take a turn. After all, talent like his doesn't fade overnight; it just needs the right moment to shine again.

The Contenders:

Vuyo Letlapa
(Sekhukhune United)

Sekhukhune United's Vuyo Letlapa is quickly becoming one of South African football's most intriguing rise-to-prominence stories. The hard-tackling defender has gone from the relative obscurity of the ABC Motsepe Leagues to catching the eye of Bafana Bafana coach Hugo Broos, all in the space of a couple of seasons. It's a reminder of the importance of determination and timing.



Not too long ago, Letlapa was plying his trade at Jomo Cosmos, fighting for recognition in the country's lower tiers. But when Sekhukhune United came calling, the young defender didn't just step up, he seized the opportunity with both hands. His composure under pressure and ability to read the game have made him a key part of Eric Tinkler's defensive setup.

At just 22, Letlapa still has plenty of growing to do, but what stands out most is his hunger and fearlessness. He doesn't play like someone grateful just to be there, he plays like someone determined to stay there. Those qualities have not gone unnoticed by Broos, who brought him into the national setup earlier this year as part of his long-term vision for Bafana's defensive depth.

If he continues on this trajectory, Letlapa could soon be more than just a backup option; he could be part of the next generation anchoring Bafana's defence. For now, though, the mission is clear: keep producing strong, disciplined performances for Sekhukhune, help the club push for honours, and keep knocking on Broos' door. From the dusty pitches of the ABC Motsepe League to potentially rubbing shoulders with Africa's elite, Letlapa's journey is the kind that inspires, proof that belief, patience, and hard work can still carve out a path to the top in South African football.

Terrence Mashego
(Durban City)

It wasn't that long ago that Mashego was a regular for Bafana and has a bronze medal from the last AFCON to prove it. The former Cape Town City standout earned widespread praise for his consistency and work rate, which ultimately saw him secure a big move to Mamelodi Sundowns. At the time, it felt like the natural next step for a player on the rise, a chance to test himself among Africa's elite and challenge for trophies. Yet, as many have discovered before him, life at Chloorkop can be both a blessing and a curse. Competing in a squad stacked with internationals, Mashego soon found himself on the fringes, a victim of the very depth and quality that drew him there in the first place.

It's a story not unlike that of Fawaaz Basadien currently – talented full-backs with proven ability, but struggling for consistent minutes in an environment where the standards are sky-high. And as Mashego knows all too well, form and rhythm are everything when it comes to international football. Without regular game-time, even established players can quietly slip out of contention.

But if there's one thing that defines Mashego, it's his resilience and optimism. He's not one to dwell on set-backs or make excuses. Instead, he's embracing a new chapter, a loan spell at Durban City, where the goal is simple: rediscover



his best football. Early signs suggest he's settling in well, relishing the opportunity to play regularly again and showcase the qualities that once made him a mainstay for both club and country.

At 29, Mashego still has plenty left in the tank. If all goes to plan, this stint in Durban could well be the reboot he needs, a chance to remind everyone, including Hugo Broos, that Terrence Mashego's story with the national team is far from finished.

Bradley Cross (Kaizer Chiefs)

The uncapped Bradley Cross is quietly, but convincingly, making his mark at Kaizer Chiefs. While much of the attention was focused on the club's new signings meant to strengthen the left side of defence, it's the 24-year-old former Black Aces and Wits youth product who has steadily made that position his own. Composed, confident, and consistent, Cross has brought a sense of balance and reliability to the Amakhosi backline that has been sorely missing in recent seasons. His versatility is one of his biggest assets. Though recently deployed at left-back, Cross is equally comfortable slotting into central defence, a flexibility that has not gone unnoticed by the Chiefs' technical team.

Cross's football journey has been anything but linear. Having spent time in Germany and England, experiences that hardened him both mentally and tactically, he returned home with a sharper edge and a greater understanding of the demands of modern football. Those lessons are now showing week after week in his performances: clever positioning, measured aggression, and a calmness on the ball that belies his age. Over the past few months, Chiefs fans have begun to take notice. While others have struggled for consistency, Cross's steady rise has been a bright spot in what has been a transitional period for the club. And as for Broos, the question now lingers: has the Belgian taken note? Broos is known for rewarding form and tactical intelligence, and Cross could be positioning himself perfectly for a national team call-up.

Neo Rapoo (Siwelele FC)

Neo Rapoo has been one of those names whispered in South African football circles for a while now, a player fans and scouts alike have been waiting to see make that long-anticipated leap from promise to prominence. The Amajita star has flirted with a breakthrough for several seasons, showing flashes of brilliance that hinted at something special, but 2025 feels like the year he finally steps out of the shadows and begins to carve out his place among the country's next generation of stars.

Already proven on the youth stage, where he played a key role in South Africa's U20 AFCON triumph, Rapoo now faces the

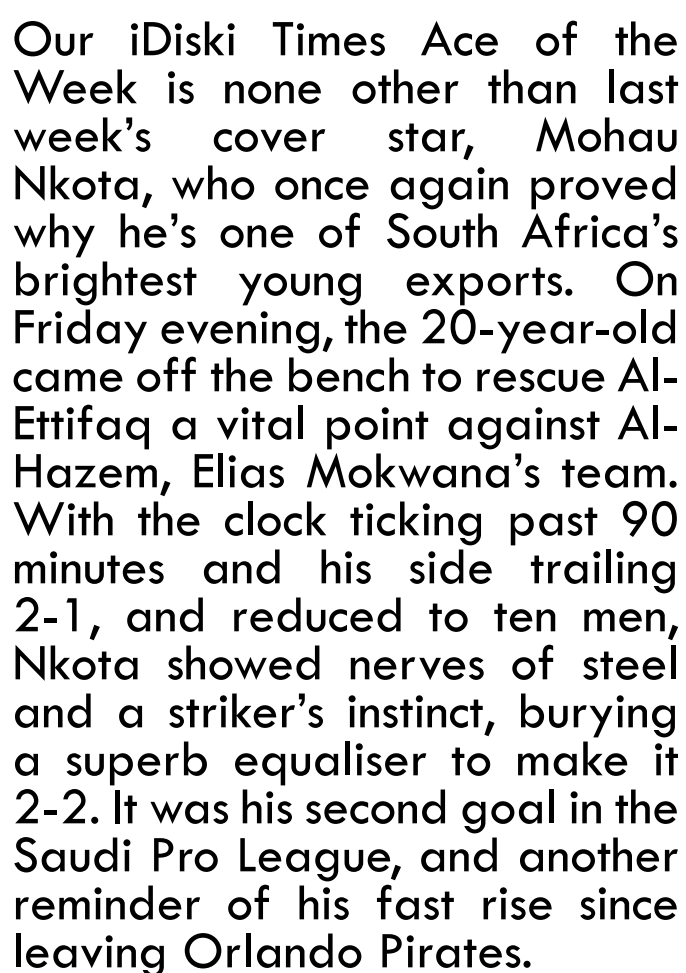
ultimate test: translating that potential into consistent performances at senior level. It's never an easy transition, but everything about the young left-footer suggests he's ready for it, from his composure under pressure to his willingness to take risks and drive his team forward.

Much like Modiba, to whom he's often compared, Rapoo's versatility is one of his greatest strengths. Equally comfortable surging down the flank as an attacking winger or tracking back as a disciplined full-back, he offers coaches flexibility and flair in equal measure. But perhaps what excites observers most is his potential to truly redefine the modern South African left-back. With his energy, technical ability, and attacking instincts, Rapoo carries echoes not only of Modiba, but of the legendary David Nyathi, one of Bafana's finest in that role.

If his rise continues on this trajectory, it might not be long before fans are no longer talking about Rapoo as "the next Nyathi" but rather, as the first Rapoo.



*** off the bench**





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 (Part 2)**

This week’s we continue our conversation with 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. This week, we continue to discuss some of his footballing ideas from a technical perspective. And also Rulani shares a favourite training session with us.

Something we have discussed frequently on this platform is that of an approach where we teach players in a more implicit way rather than very explicitly telling them what to do all the time. As a coach who is famous for a very analytical approach to football, I’d be very interested in your opinion on this matter.

**Implicit vs Explicit Coaching -
Teaching Perception**

RM: My journey has taught me that diagonality cannot be taught — it must be perceived.

In the early part of my career, I over-explained patterns. Now, influenced by my trips to Brazil and especially to Fluminense, I understand that the environment must teach for you. In Rio, I observed how relationism lives in how they live and this transcends into how they play football - constant proximity, third-man coordination, and micro-adaptations in the same possession sequence. Just go and see

the way of life at the Copacabana beach in Rio. See how close the people interact, move between beach soccer, beach volleyball and many other beach sports. That trip was instrumental; it helped me understand how the blueprint breathes, not just how it is drawn.

At MCA, this has translated into implicit learning environments. Understanding the culture and studying the way of life before moving into the way of playing football. Fortunately, in Algeria, there is a strong sense of street football, and the development of many football players goes through the street football, beach football and even the futsal tutorials. So it’s important then to start to use constraint-based rondos where the goal is to play diagonally through two lines before scoring, or positional games with angled scoring zones that help guide perception. The players are not told what to see; they discover it through the environment, like in the street or on the beach. You have to see the old woman jogging with the dog or the car coming by or even the stone or rock that could hurt you or become a hazard in your passing lane or dribbling path. This isn’t something you can be coached. That is how we build intelligence, not just obedience.

Finally, as is customary when we have expert interviews here. Could you perhaps share with the readers one of your favourite practices that coaches might be able to adopt and

adapt to their teams?

A Favourite Exercise - “The Diagonal Continuum”

RM: One of my favourite practices - is what we call the “Diagonal Continuum.”

- Structure: Three zones — central and two half-spaces, with mini-goals wide.
- Objective: Progress the ball diagonally across zones in no more than three passes before finishing in 1 touch.
- Constraints: The receiver must be on the half-turn; the final pass must be diagonal, and the finish must be a one-touch finish.

Coaching focus: Distances, Third-man runs, scanning behaviour, and line-breaking through angles rather than speed.

It’s simple but powerful. It trains perception, rhythm, and coordination - the same elements that define relational football.

Final Reflection

RM: From Wydad’s structural re-education and strategic recruitment, to Sundowns’ three-year refinement of distances, tilts, and diagonals, to the foundational phase at MC Alger, my coaching evolution has been defined by one idea - angles over lines.

Diagonality is not a passing pattern; it’s a philosophy of perception. It connects progression with control, structure with spontaneity, science with intuition. And it reminds us that football of the future, at its highest level, will not be played in straight lines — it’ll be played through relationships and chemistry because football is a microscopic reflection of society.

Thank you for your time, coach and all the very best for the season!





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