



DERBY DEBUTANTS WHO COULD LIGHT UP SOWETO



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FEATURE



TEAM OF THE WEEK
& ACE OF THE WEEK



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LA LIGA FUTURE FOR MOFOKENG?

A Spanish outfit are reportedly monitoring the progress of Orlando Pirates winger Relebohile Mofokeng. The Spanish club are said to have made contact with the Buccaneers in January over a loan with an option to buy, which was not considered by Pirates. With the club aiming to win their first league title since 2012, Mofokeng, who also attracted bids from Israeli giants Maccabi Haifa and Maccabi Tel Aviv, was not considered to be an option to be loaned out this season. However, their stance on his future could change by the end of the campaign, when the player is likely to be heading to the 2026 FIFA World Cup with the South Africa national team.



FORMER SAFA TD ON SEKHUKHUNE'S RADAR

Sekhukhune United could be set to rope in former SAFA technical director Dr Walter Steenbok. Babina Noko are looking to boost their technical department before the season ends, and Steenbok has been earmarked for a possible role. Steenbok previously worked at both Mamelodi Sundowns and Kaizer Chiefs and is credited for the good work he did during his time with SAFA, especially when it comes to coaching development. The experience of Steenbok could help Babina Noko when it comes to both their scouting and development structures.



DITLHOKWE ON HUNT RADAR?

Botswana national team captain Thatayaone Dithokwe is said to be on the radar of Stellenbosch for next season, with his future in Libya in doubt. The 27-year-old is currently on loan at Al Shomooa SC from Al Ittihad, where he's been for the past season and a half after joining in a reported R15m transfer from Kaizer Chiefs. 'TT' worked with new Stellies head coach Gavin Hunt during their time together at the now-defunct SuperSport United, where he emerged as one of the league's leading defenders.



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‘WHY UNITY WILL DEFINE THE FUTURE OF AFRICAN FOOTBALL’

African football has never lacked talent. What it has lacked, for many years, is structure and unity at club level. That is what the African Club Association (ACA) is determined to change.

Launched in Cairo in November 2023, the ACA represents a major shift in how professional clubs across the continent organise themselves and shape their future. For the first time, African clubs have a formal, unified platform created specifically to represent their interests, strengthen their foundations and help them grow into globally competitive institutions.

The association operates in partnership with the Confederation of African Football (CAF), but its focus is clear: to ensure clubs are no longer operating in isolation. For too long, many clubs have faced governance, commercial and operational challenges on their own. The ACA changes that by creating a collective voice and support system designed to professionalise the African club game.

The leadership reflects both credibility and modern thinking. The association is led by Hersi Ally Said, president of Young Africans SC, with Jessica Motaung of Kaizer Chiefs serving as vice president. Their presence is significant. Both understand the realities of running professional clubs in Africa, but also the commercial and strategic direction needed to compete in the modern game.

“I accepted the responsibility as Vice President to be in the leadership of this initiative because I believe African clubs must be active participants in defining their future. Our growth must be deliberate and well governed. The ACA represents a commitment to professionalism, unity and sustainable progress for the continent’s game,” Motaung told iDiski Times.

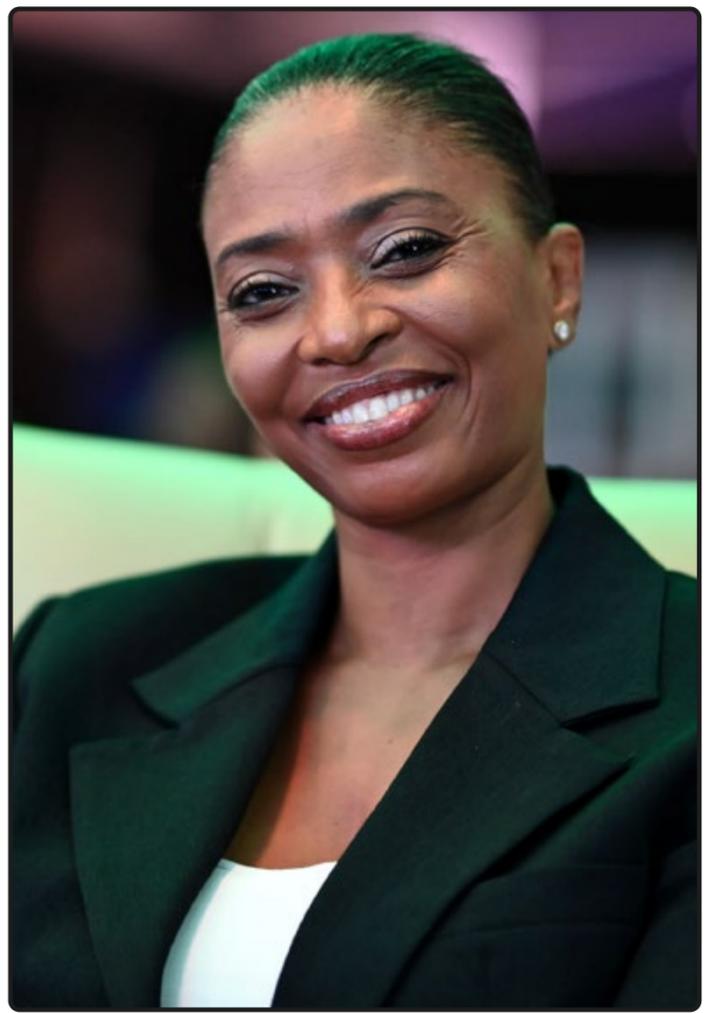
A key part of the ACA’s current drive is encouraging more clubs across the continent to sign up. Simply put, the strength of the organisation lies in its numbers. The more clubs that join, the stronger their collective influence becomes — whether that’s in discussions around competitions, commercial opportunities or the overall direction of African football.

Membership is not just symbolic. It gives clubs access to expertise in governance, administration, marketing and licensing — areas that are essential for sustainability but often underdeveloped. It also creates opportunities for collaboration between clubs, something African football has not fully maximised in the past.

The commercial aspect is arguably one of the most important. African clubs have massive fanbases and cultural influence, but many still struggle to convert that into consistent revenue. The ACA aims to help clubs build stronger commercial models, attract sponsors and improve their overall business operations. That is critical if African clubs want to retain talent, improve facilities and compete more effectively on the global stage.

“The establishment of the African Club Association was an important step in the continued evolution of football on our continent. Clubs are the primary drivers of the professional game,” Motaung says.

“They develop players, sustain competitions and serve as anchors within their countries. Yet, until recently, there had not been a formal



continental platform dedicated specifically to representing their collective interests.

“The ACA was formed to address that gap. It is designed to provide structure, alignment and a clear channel of engagement on matters that impact club football across Africa. Strong governance and coordinated dialogue and commercialisation of clubs are essential if we are to strengthen our competitions and position African clubs more competitively on the global stage.

“It’s also an opportunity for clubs to forge strong relationships amongst themselves and share ideas, adapt strategies that will significantly see the growth acceleration of club football on the continent.

“The fact that 19 clubs have already registered reflects a shared understanding that the future of African football requires collaboration and long-term thinking. This is not about short-term agendas; it is about building institutional capacity and ensuring that clubs have a constructive role in shaping the direction of the game.”

There is also a long-term football vision behind it. Youth development, infrastructure and professional standards are all part of the agenda. If African clubs become stronger institutions, the entire ecosystem benefits — from players and coaches to supporters and national teams.

What makes the ACA important is not just what it is now, but what it represents. It signals a shift in mindset. African clubs are no longer content with working alone or being left out of key decisions. They are organising, collaborating and taking ownership of their future.

The reality is simple: the growth of African football depends on the strength of its clubs. Strong clubs create better competitions. Better competitions attract more investment. And more investment drives the game forward.

The African Club Association could prove to be one of the most important steps in that journey. Not overnight, but over time.

Because the future of African football will not be built in isolation. It will be built in unity.

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A FAIRYTALE STORY FOR CASRIC STARS

We already knew there'd be a new Nedbank Cup champion after defending champions Kaizer Chiefs lost in the Round of 32. Still, it won't be Mamelodi Sundowns or Orlando Pirates, as the two Gauteng giants were knocked out by TS Galaxy and Casric Stars, respectively in the last 16.

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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Casric Stars Beat Orlando Pirates - Nkululeko Nkewu

"It is a nightmare for the sponsors, Nedbank!

"They lost both Orlando Pirates and Mamelodi Sundowns on the same day!

"Both to clubs from Mpumalanga, Casric Stars and TS Galaxy!

"Congratulations to Casric Stars. For them, it's a fairytale story. They lost their promotion push in the playoffs last season, and now they add another page to their story by beating Orlando Pirates at the most difficult ground for away teams in South Africa.

"Well done to the owner/coach, Bucs Mthombeni. Football doesn't welcome outsiders. All coaches are former players.

"But he has managed to drag his team to playoffs and now the quarterfinals of the Nedbank Cup. It is a remarkable achievement for someone who did not have a professional career.

"A brilliant achievement for TS Galaxy as well, beating Sundowns.

"I had a feeling that if Sundowns changed their squad, TS Galaxy would win the game. Congratulations to Tim Sukazi and family."

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MUHSIN & DE SA'S ADVICE TO DERBY DEBUTANT OUADDOU

By Matshelane Mamabolo

Abdeslam Ouaddou has, in a short space of time, endeared himself to the Orlando Pirates faithful, the Moroccan coach doing a good job of taking off where the beloved Jose Riveiro left, by seeing to it that the Buccaneers continue with their trophy-winning ways.

This past weekend's disappointing elimination from the Nedbank Cup by Motsepe Foundation Championship side Casric Stars will sting for a while, but it will not take away from Ouaddou's delivery of both the MTN8 and the Carling Knockout trophies.

Yet, there is one thing the former Fulham defender can do to tug at The Ghost's heartstrings even more. Win the Soweto Derby on debut. Should he beat Kaizer Chiefs in Saturday's Betway Premiership clash, Ouaddou will make that midweek loss to Mamelodi Sundowns a distant memory and give the Pirates supporters bragging rights which sometimes matter more than trophies.

But can he?

Recent history suggests Ouaddou is on a hiding to nothing, with many of his predecessors having failed to win the country's biggest fixture at the first time of asking. It is a record Ouaddou would choose to ignore, safe in the knowledge that statistics are no more than numbers on a piece of paper with no to little influence on the outcome of matches.

Still, it is a heavy burden to carry as a coach of either side, particularly for the first timer, as reputations can be made or broken by this match.

Defeat on debut is not the end of the world, though. After all, when he first coached in the Soweto Derby, Ouaddou's predecessor Riveiro came a cropper as he suffered a 1-0 loss nearly four years ago.

Who could ever forget that superb long-range goal by Yusuf Maart that won Chiefs the match? But the Spaniard still went on to become a favourite of The Ghost.

Two years prior to that, it was German Josef Zinnbauer who went down by the same scoreline to Amakhosi – Lebogang Manyama finding the net.

Rulani Mokwena lost a 3-2 in 2019, while all of Milutin Sredojevic, Kjell Jonevret and Muhsin Ertugral before him could only register stalemates on Derby debuts as the Buccaneers coaches.

Ertugral had been on the other end of this big match, having coached Chiefs in two spells, and is perhaps best placed to speak on what it is like to be a coach for the first time in the derby: "For a coach

ERTUGRAL: "THE REAL DANGER WOULD BE OVERREACTING TO THE OCCASION, I THINK. CHANGING TOO MUCH WOULD BE DISASTROUS."





experiencing his first derby, you carry the emotional weight of the entire club and fans.”

Ouaddou has shown in a short space of time to be a coach with BMT (big match temperament), as evidenced by his winning the two cup competitions (three if you include the exhibition Carling All Stars match) already.

But what advice would Ertugral share with him, were the Moroccan to call for tips?

“When you have coached both sides of the Soweto Derby, you will see it differently, I think. From the outside, it is noise, emotion, history, excitement, pressure etcetera. From the inside, our job is the opposite of all what is visible from the outside. It is all about calming things down.”

The fiery Turk shared how he approached this massive encounter.

“I generally replayed situations in my mind. Plan A and B. Score-wise, worst case to call up quickly. You think about substitutions before the match even starts. That’s normal. The real danger would be overreacting to the occasion, I think. Changing too much would be disastrous. I did and paid the price,” he chuckles before sharing some words of wisdom.

“Abandoning your principles because the match feels bigger is not a good idea. The week into it requires you to trust in your work.”

So, essentially, Ouaddou must keep with what has been working for him and perhaps fix what went wrong in the last two matches if he is to overcome Amakhosi.

Roger De Sa also coached Pirates and remembers drawing his first Soweto Derby goalless. His case, he says, was supposed to have been helped by the fact he’d played and coached against both Chiefs and Pirates. He’d also

DE SA: “AS A COACH, DON’T HYPE IT UP. THERE’S NO NEED TO MOTIVATE THE PLAYERS BECAUSE THE MATCH IN ITSELF IS GREAT MOTIVATION. INSTEAD, YOU NEED TO CALM THEM DOWN, KEEP THEM FOCUSED.”

played in the original Soweto derby for Moroka Swallows against Pirates. So he was somewhat aware of the magnitude. Or so he thought.

“I thought, argh, it’s the derby, but as a coach, I experienced a different monster altogether. On derby week, the staffing changes. Suddenly, all the three club doctors come; the press is all over the sessions, there are suddenly 50 balls instead of the normal 30 for training sessions. There’s just this buzz that you can’t help but feel. I remember certain players’ injuries suddenly healing faster; the tempo at training steps up. There’s a good vibe, and all you must do as a coach is feed off it, let it propel you and the team.”

But how do you handle the match itself as a coach, Rogerio?

“As a coach, don’t hype it up. There’s no need to motivate the players because the match in itself is great motivation. Instead, you need to calm them down, keep them focused. From my observation of him, Ouaddou is a calm personality, and given his vast experience as both player and coach, he should do well in this regard. For me, once the game started, I dealt with it moment by moment. In reality, it should be just about the three





points, right? But this one has the cream on top.”

Ertugral says while the coaches plan tactics and approaches, the result of a Soweto Derby is often not dependent on such.

“Looking back, I would say these types of games are not won by the team that is more structurally or tactically superior. I think emotions are high, and the team that stays calmer for longer has more potential to win it.”

Calmness seems to be second nature to Ouaddou. Could this be a sign he will bring an end to the wretched Soweto Derby debut runs the Pirates coaches have had in recent years?

De Sa is not really bothered who wins, so long as the match does not produce

ERTUGRAL: “FOR A COACH EXPERIENCING HIS FIRST DERBY, YOU CARRY THE EMOTIONAL WEIGHT OF THE ENTIRE CLUB AND FANS.”

a dull stalemate.

“We don’t want another draw unless it is a high-scoring one,” De Sa chuckles.

“I was involved in two 0-0 draws. They were dull; it was like we were both playing not to lose. I hope this won’t be the case with this one.”

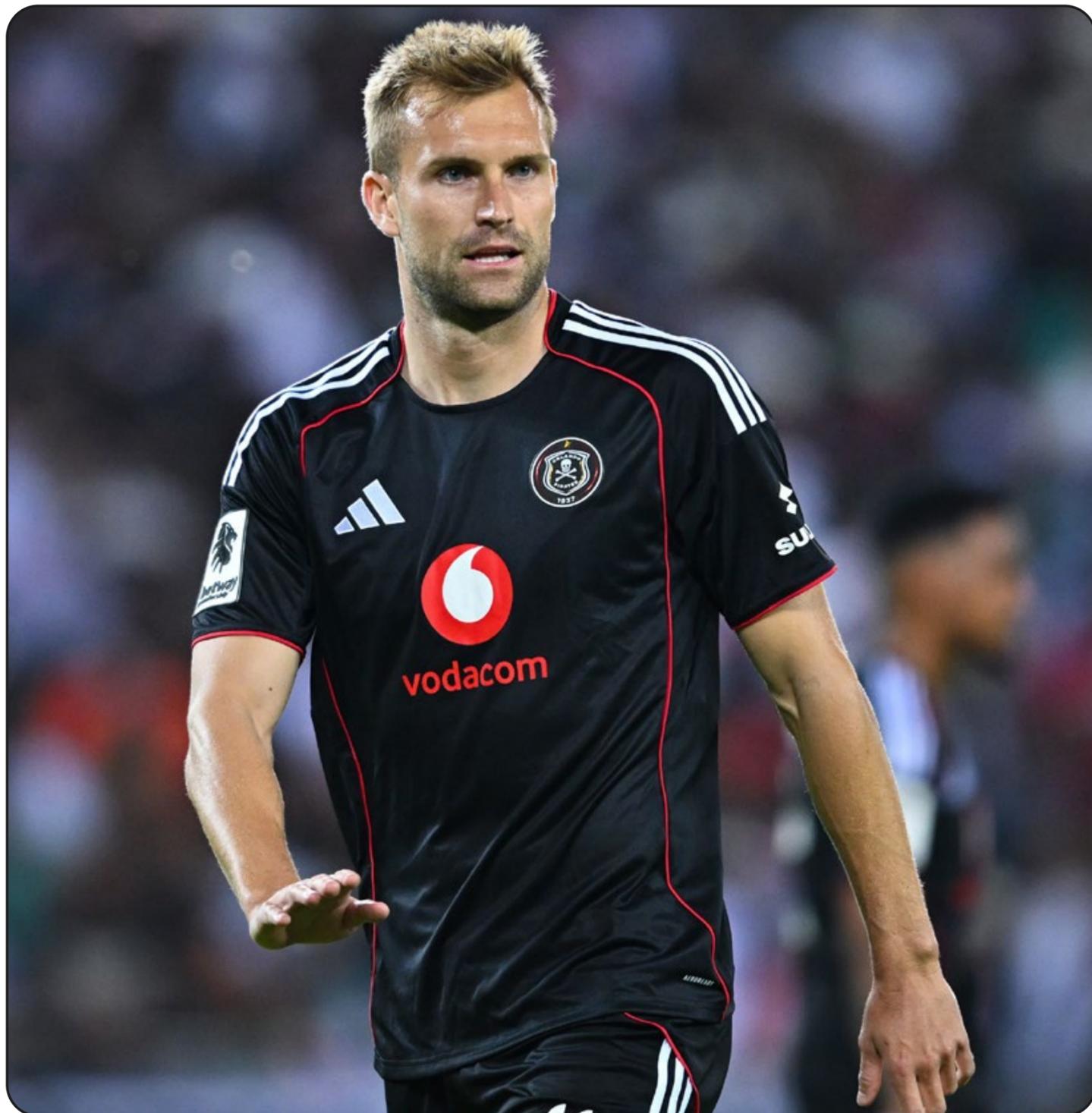
It should not be. Not with Ouaddou looking to avoid a hat-trick of defeats and eager to have a memorable Soweto Derby debut.

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DEBONAIRS PIZZA





DE JONG'S RISING ASPIRATIONS AFTER PIRATES MOVE

By Matshelane Mamabolo

Among the players likely to make their Soweto Derby debuts is Orlando Pirates' attacker Andre de Jong. Signed mid-season from Stellenbosch FC, the New Zealander has defied initial thoughts that he would not fit into the Buccaneers' playing way, with coach Abdeslam Ouaddou already finding him a place in the team.

He goes into Saturday's clash with Kaizer Chiefs at the FNB Stadium on the back of two successive appearances against Mamelodi Sundowns as a late substitute and a starter (played 79 minutes) in the Nedbank Cup Round of 16 against Casric Stars. Though both matches ended in defeat, De Jong can be delighted with his input as he got a 6.3 rating for the 17 minutes he played against Sundowns. He worked hard at pressing the Brazilians' defence as the Buccaneers went in search of the equaliser that never came.

Against Casric, the Kiwi worked his socks off, doing pretty well to protect the ball and allow the midfielders to join in the attack and even had some shots at goal. He was tireless in his fetching of the ball deep in the field and often got as far back into his own box to assist in defensive duties.

He did lose possession on occasions, leading to some jeers from The Ghost.

That, though, is par for the course at a club as big as Pirates, and no doubt De Jong is experienced enough to develop a thick skin when it comes to such.

After all, he has the support of his coach, Abdeslam Ouaddou, who understands just how hard it is to climb on the proverbial moving train.

"About Andre, when you come in the middle of the season, for any player, it is not easy. He is doing his best to adapt to the team, and today we decided to give him time, and to be honest, he did good things in the position we asked him to," Ouaddou said post the 5-4 shoot-out defeat to Motsepe Foundation Championship outfit Casric Stars at the weekend. "Maybe we needed his goal, but the goal does not have to come just from him.

"His integration is coming step by step. Of course, we don't have time in a big club like Pirates, but we have to back him and the other new players. We have to do our best to help them"

Ouaddou had earlier explained that they'd done an orientation for De Jong, as they do with all newcomers and felt the player was settling in well.

"When he came, we – the technical staff and our analysts department – sat with him. We showed him all the data and what he is able to bring us to the club. He's a very clever player. Humanly, he is a top man – very kind and very ambitious as well."

Experienced and accomplished a player as he is, De Jong is still very eager to learn, Ouaddou has found.



“And all the time, when we give him time to show what he’s able to do, he tries to give his best. And I’m sure that there is a lot of the best from André that we are going to see in the next 13 or 14 games that we have in the league. I’m very happy about his commitment. I’m very happy about what he can bring to the team. At the moment, with the numbers that we have, it’s difficult to bring him up quickly, but I’m sure that we will see the best from him soon.”

De Jong himself is keen to give his best to Pirates and has spoken openly about his desire to help the club win more trophies, particularly the league title they are in serious contention for. On a personal level, the 29-year-old is keen to prove himself worthy of the revered black and white jersey of the Buccaneers while also shining enough to convince the New Zealand national team’s coach that he is worthy of a place in the squad that will head to the World Cup in June.

Here are De Jong’s views on a host of topics.

ON BEING A BUCCANEER

So far, it’s been very enjoyable. Of course, it’s always tough to move mid-season, but the players as well as the technical team have been really hospitable for me. I think I’m finding my feet nicely, so – yeah – looking forward to a big couple of weeks ahead, but so far I am really enjoying Johannesburg and the team. When Pirates first showed interest, it was a very exciting move for me. I think it really pushes my aspirations to make the New Zealand World Cup team because that’s one of my big goals. And then also because Pirates have obviously collected a lot of trophies in the past, so to join an establishment like this is really good for my career, and hopefully I can help contribute to the team winning more trophies.

ON SETTLING AND FINDING HIS PLACE IN THE TEAM

Yeah, I do feel settled. Obviously, it’s been a month-and-a-half since coming here, and the camp up in Rustenburg was really good to get to know the other players and the technical team. But

DE JONG ON THE DERBY: “THAT’S OBVIOUSLY GOING TO BE A MASSIVE OCCASION, AND HOPEFULLY I CAN BE IN THE SQUAD AND TAKE PART IN THAT GAME. IT’S ANY PLAYER’S DREAM TO PLAY IN FRONT OF BIG CROWDS AT BEAUTIFUL STADIUMS.”

yeah, I think I am showing some glimpses in the time that I’ve had on the field, and hopefully I can add to that coming in (on the pitch).

ON WHAT HAS HELPED HIM ADAPT AT PIRATES

Obviously, there are some familiar faces which helped. There’s Deano (Van Rooyen, former Stellies teammate); Cash (Makhehleri Makhaula) with AmaZulu, I’ve played with him before; Thapelo (Xoki) as well at Amazulu. So that’s been very nice. Also, Ruan (Rust), the head of performance (formerly with Stellies), has helped me settle in. So seeing familiar faces helps a lot, and also, the guys have been amazing. They’ve taken the time to get to know me, and [I’ve done] likewise. So, I think when you know people off the field, it helps on the field, and hopefully that can continue.

ON WHY HE BLOSSOMED AT STELLIES

Yeah, I think there were a few contributing factors. Obviously, getting game-time was a massive thing and having the support of the technical team at Stellenbosch was massive for me. At AmaZulu, I unfortunately got injured a few too many times and was in and out of the team. Then obviously, Royal AM was a very short stint. But yeah, I really found my feet at Stellenbosch, which was really a great sort of stepping stone for me.



**ON THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PLAYING FOR PIRATES AND STELLIES**

Obviously, at Pirates you have a lot of the ball, whereas at Stellenbosch you'd probably share the ball 50-50 with the opposition. But in terms of attack, they are very, very similar – lots of speed in both teams, so lots of wingers to release and yeah to get into the box to finish things off.

ON COMPETITION FOR POSITIONS

Oh, absolutely, there's competition, and I think it is throughout the whole team, not just in the number 10 position. So, when you get your chance, yeah, it's obviously trying to have an impact for the team going forward, and yeah, it's also being patient. I think at a club like this, obviously, not everyone can play, so you're supporting the guys who are playing, and I know some sort of natural selection will take place. Then you'll get your chance, and it's about taking it when it comes.

ON HIS CHANCES OF MAKING THE ALL WHITES WORLD CUP SQUAD

I've been called up the last two windows, so yeah, hopefully I can get a call-up in March. They got a couple of games back in New Zealand, which would be amazing to be involved in. And then, obviously, yeah, I am pushing for that final call in May. It really is exciting for New Zealand football, obviously because it is the first time – similar to South Africa – being back at the World Cup since 2010. So, yeah, it is a big opportunity to be involved in that.

ON HOW BEING A BUCCANEER WILL AID HIS WORLD CUP DREAMS

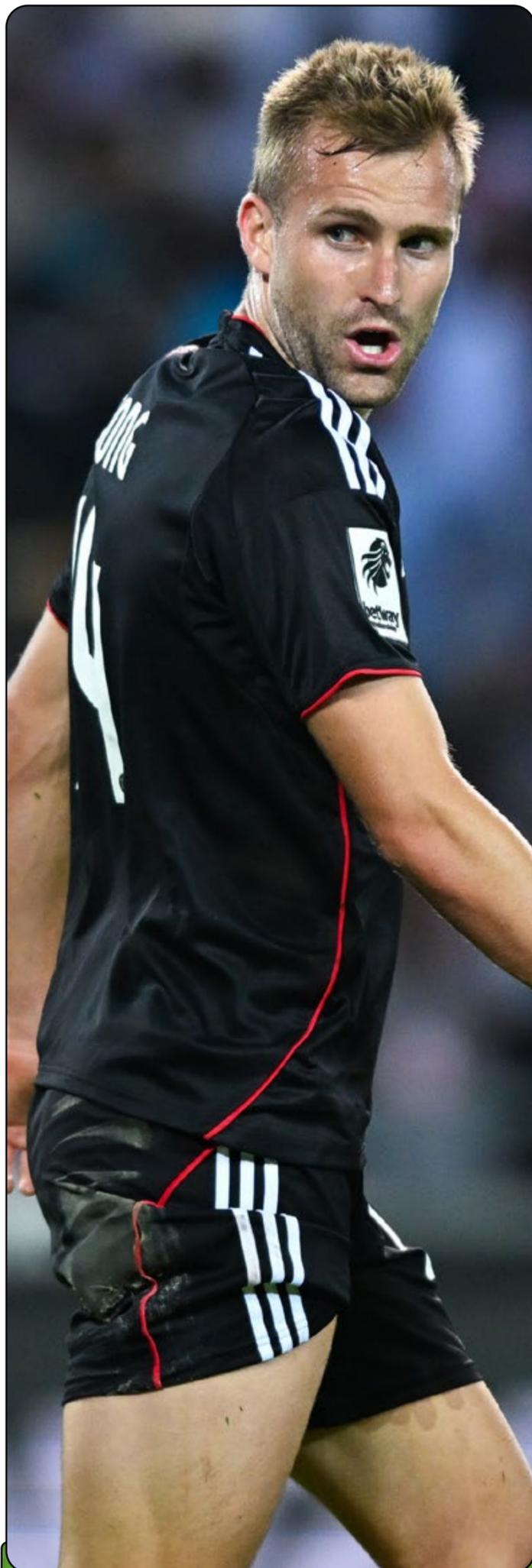
I think since the move to Pirates, I've seen the exposure that it brings – obviously with social media and with the (mainstream) media. I think people back in New Zealand are starting to realise how big of a move it is, which is obviously good for my ambitions. But, yeah, of course, to play in these bigger games like the Chiefs game is huge, and to be involved in that is really exciting for me, and hopefully I can contribute.

ON PLAYING IN FRONT OF BIGGER CROWDS NOW

Yeah, it absolutely is motivation. I think any player would love to play in front of a sold-out stadium every week. I think the reception I've got from the fans has been incredible as well, and I'm very grateful for that. So, hopefully that continues, and yeah, just hoping to build on obviously what Pirates have done so far this season and end the season strong.

ON THE SOWETO DERBY

I think the games are coming thick and fast, and obviously big games as well. I've obviously seen it's already sold out and sold out in a number of hours [of the tickets going on sale]. So that's obviously going to be a massive occasion, and hopefully I can be in the squad and take part in that game. It's any player's dream to play in front of big crowds at beautiful stadiums, and hopefully I can



OUADDOU: "HE'S A VERY CLEVER PLAYER. HUMANLY, HE IS A TOP MAN – VERY KIND AND VERY AMBITIOUS AS WELL."

get on the pitch.

ON EMULATING A SUCCESSFUL COMPATRIOT

Yeah, obviously there's been a few New Zealanders who have played over here [before me], in Jeremy Brockie and also Michael Boxall. So, prior to coming over here, I actually chatted to them, and yeah, they obviously spoke very highly of the league and the country in general. So far, my time has been incredible. So yeah, [I'm] just hoping to emulate some of the stuff that Brockie obviously did in front of goal, and yeah, if you can do half of what he did, then it'd be amazing, of course.





THIS IS NOT A NORMAL GAME - SOWETO DERBY DEBUTANTS WARNED

By Matshelane Mamabolo

Such has been the high rate of player turnover at both Kaizer Chiefs and Orlando Pirates in recent times that Saturday's Betway Premiership match between the two teams could see a record number of players making their Soweto Derby debuts.

There are no fewer than 22 players on both sides who have never participated in the country's biggest match, and a good number of them have been active for their clubs in recent matches. That number swells to 25 if you add the three who have switched from Pirates to Chiefs and might be experiencing the derby from the other side for the first time.

That the Buccaneers coach Abdeslam Ouaddou is a rookie of this tie, while the Amakhosi co-coaches Cedric Kaze and Ben Youssef Khalil will also be taking charge for the first time, having previously done so under Nasreddine Nabi's leadership, adds to the intrigue of the match.

How will all the 'new coaches' deal with the pressure of a match of this magnitude? And how do they impress on the rookie players to deal with the occasion?

For no matter how experienced a player might be, the Soweto Derby is a different kettle of fish and can never be treated as 'just another match'.

Oswin Appollis, for example, is a proven player with massive international experience. But on Saturday, he will be encountering an altogether completely new monster. How will he respond?

William Shongwe, the SuperSport analyst who has played for both these two clubs, knows better than most what it

takes to play in the derby, and while he anticipates that an Appollis, for example, should be able to deal with the pressure given his experience, he worries for the others.

"It's not just about the game. It's you as an individual just thinking about what could possibly happen. It's the type of game that could either make or destroy you. You get the opportunity, and you make use of it because you get to stay in the minds of the fans for a long time if you make a positive impact on the match. So, that – unfortunately - on its own is pressure for these players."

Shongwe says in South Africa, you are almost half a player if you've never participated in the Soweto derby.

"Yes, you want to play in the derby because it's like if you're a player that you haven't played in the derby like this. It's like, yeah, I played football, but, you know, there's something missing in your career. That goes with it, you know, to say, at least I might have the opportunity to feature. I don't care what happens thereafter. Whenever players are being mentioned alongside the derby, I'll be one of those. And that comes with so much pressure that you have to manage it so well, particularly for those making their debuts in the derby. Like I said, it's a make-or-break."

Such pressure, and it does not help that the players are essentially on their own.

"Are there enough psychologists within the club to prepare you for that? Unfortunately, the answer is No. You're on your own. People just simply take it that because you've played for Pirates or Chiefs and you've featured in this game and that game, you'll therefore





“THIS IS NOT A NORMAL GAME. I STILL REMEMBER HOW DOCTOR KHUMALO WAS SHAKING FOR HIS DEBUT IN THE CHARITY CUP BACK IN 1987, AND WE HAD TO CALM HIM DOWN AND HELP HIM SETTLE.”

just walk into the park with this one as well. That it will be normal. But No. This is not a normal game. I still remember how Doctor Khumalo was shaking for his debut in the Charity Cup back in 1987, and we had to calm him down and help him settle.”

The role of the senior players and the coaches will thus be crucial for the debutants.

“The challenge for the debutants is that you cannot afford to expose yourself to the immense pressure. You’ve got to just walk in there as if it’s normal and you’re excited about it. But they don’t know what’s going on inside of you. So, these players, they’ve already featured in a number of games for Pirates or Chiefs. The ones at Pirates have won two cups already, so they’ve got some source of confidence. But the nerves will be there, and the older and senior players in and around you have to say, ‘hey son, come on, come on now. You can do this thing.’ The senior players are going to have to be on point as far as watching what’s happening with this. Is he his normal self today? Did he eat at all? Because they tell me the stomach is turning. It’s even hard to eat.”

Muhsin Ertugral, who, like Shongwe, worked for both clubs, had an approach he took with debutants that worked for him.

“Most important is to create calm. Debutants don’t need motivation. They are already overflowing with it. The real challenge is helping them manage that over-motivation. So the key job for me was always to calm them down. So, I’d have some personal talks, and I had a security pattern for them to fall into. For me, before the derby I talked less because it was important to simplify their world and make sure the newcomers felt they fitted in.”

Roger de Sa coached Pirates and remembers that his approach, especially with the debutants, was to get them to live what was a once-in-a-lifetime moment. I told them, look around, enjoy the bus ride to the stadium and soak it all in.

“I believe the right thing to do is to open yourself and enjoy it. This is a spectacle, it is an occasion like no other in the local game, and you must live it. If a musician is going to perform at their biggest gig, they give it their all and enjoy it, right? It’s the same with footballers. Don’t tell them this is a big match and bombard them with tactics. Let them live it. Even if they’ve never played in the derby before, they’ve played matches for these big clubs and even against them before they joined. Yes, it is a special match, but let them savour it.”

CROSSING OVER TO THE OTHER SIDE

All of Siphesihle Ndlovu, Paseka Mako and Thabiso Monyane have Soweto Derby experience having previously played for Pirates. They are now with Chiefs and could get a taste of the derby from the other side. What awaits them, Mr Shongwe?

“It won’t be easy because the opposite crowd will let you feel that you are somewhat of a traitor. But that’s something you should always expect. The challenge comes from within. With me, I remember I still had some anger towards Chiefs and felt they’d dropped me. So I was like, this is my moment, let’s see who has the last laugh. So, while you try to focus on your game, you can’t help but want to prove a point. So, unfortunately, you will try as a player to do away with it and just focus on the game on the day. You know, to go out there and perform as best you can and win a game for your club without bringing any other factors into it, like what happened in the past. You’ve got to try, because that can distract you



“IT’S THE TYPE OF GAME THAT COULD EITHER MAKE OR DESTROY YOU. YOU GET THE OPPORTUNITY, AND YOU MAKE USE OF IT BECAUSE YOU GET TO STAY IN THE MINDS OF THE FANS FOR A LONG TIME.”



as well.”

Unlike Shongwe, though, the Chiefs trio’s departures from Pirates were amicable. Ndlovu is sure to want to score should he play to put his name on that short list of players who have scored for both sides in the derby.

WHICH DEBUTANTS MIGHT SHINE BRIGHT

Looking at the long list of players likely to make their debuts, Shongwe says, if picked, Sipho Mbule could be the star of the show.

“We all know that Appollis has the knack of coming through when it comes to these types of games. He did not start last weekend, so it will depend on how the coach chooses to use him. I’d say send him in right away. From my point of view, Mbule can make a huge mark on this derby. Start him right away. I know that some people feel he’s not incisive enough when he plays. Sometimes he takes it too easy. But these are the types of games that can set Mbule on the right path. He can be headstrong and say ‘right, this is my moment.’ He can let the people remember. They can forget all the other games, but this is the money game. He’s got that character. Yeah, he looks like a careless type of player sometimes. But behind that careless spirit, there is an attitude of one of the best, insofar as if you want a player to come perform for you, Mbule is that. He just needs those that know and understand him better. He needs someone who can inject him, make him a little bit angry. Just set him out, set him loose. Say yes, we’re playing as a team, and we’ve got an approach to how we want to play, but go play your game. He needs that kind of freedom. You want to set him loose. That is when he’s best. But when he’s playing too much in a structured form, you take away that independence, that freedom, that free spirit about him.”

Shongwe feels none of the potential Chiefs debutants have that ‘thing’ about them to light up the match, but says Lebohang Maboe has the requisite big match temperament to carry Amakhosi to glory.

Over the years, the Soweto Derby has seen players come on for the first time and leave a lasting legacy not only in the match but on the country’s football psyche. Who is going to do it this weekend? We wait with bated breath.

SOWETO DERBY POTENTIAL DEBUTANTS

Orlando Pirates

Oswin Appollis
Mpho Chabatsane
Cemran Dansin
Andre de Jong
Abdoulaye Mariko
Sipho Mbule
Yanela Mbuthuma
Tshepang Moremi
Daniel Msendami
Nkosikhona Ndaba
Masindi Nemtajela
Sihle Nduli

Kaizer Chiefs

Luke Baartman
Etiosa Ighodaro
Thulani Mabaso
Lebohang Maboe
Khanyisa Mayo
Flavio Silva
Asanele Velebayi
Ethan Chislett
Nkanyiso Shinga



‘TO BE A CHIEFS PLAYER, YOU HAVE TO STAND OUT’

Ahead of this weekend's Soweto derby between Orlando Pirates and Kaizer Chiefs, former Amakhosi striker SHANE MCGREGOR spoke to *iDiski Times* senior writer MATSHELANE MAMABOLO about his expectations of the country's biggest match and also gave his diagnosis of what is wrong at Chiefs and what needs to be done to see the club going back to their glory days.

Matshelane Mamabolo: Shane McGregor, thank you for giving me your time. Your former club is readying themselves for a massive game this weekend – the Soweto derby against Orlando Pirates. What kind of match are you anticipating?

Shane McGregor: Derby games are always difficult to call. And that's because everyone always raises their game on derby day. It will always be a big game. In our days, we were in control, but when a derby game came, it would be different – the playing fields levelled up. The players lift themselves, and I expect it would be the case this time, too. If you, as a player, can't lift yourself for this match, then there's a problem. Although I must say, in recent years, the Chiefs players have not really lifted themselves, not just in the derby but overall. But it's a special match, and I expect them to lift themselves.

MM: In recent years, you've been highly vocal about the state of affairs at Chiefs. They seemed to have turned the corner by winning last season's Nedbank Cup. What's your view now? Are Chiefs on the right track?

SM: Yes and no. Yes, they won the Nedbank Cup, and that was good. But are they performing to their full abilities? I am not too sure. Recently, they had that spell where they were winning matches 1-0 and not conceding goals, which was celebrated by many.

“IN OUR DAYS, WE WERE IN CONTROL, BUT WHEN A DERBY GAME CAME, IT WOULD BE DIFFERENT – THE PLAYING FIELDS LEVELLED UP.”

But is that successful? I am not sure. I mean, they got beaten the other day [by Stellenbosch in the Nedbank Cup and Zamalek in the CAF Confederation Cup]. For me, I'd be able to say yes once they've fully turned the corner. They've got to get to that stage where they are consistently winning matches, titles and trophies. They've got to be consistent all the time, and that has not been the case. It cannot be that Chiefs are up and down as it is the case now.

MM: What's wrong, though, and what should be done to fix it?

SM: A lot has got to be looked at. And this must not be taken the wrong way. I love the club, having spent the best part of my career at Chiefs, so I say things out of the love I have. The whole management aspect has to be looked at. The club is not being run properly at the moment, and if it does not change, it's gonna stay the same. Who is buying the players? Who is bringing in the coaches? Why is there infighting within the club?

MM: Is there infighting?

SM: From where I'm sitting, it looks like it. There seems to be infighting among management. There's too many people speaking into the coach's ear, and it appears there are niggles between those in charge. You need to have one





person leading the club. In our time, we had Kaizer doing everything; now there's too many people, too many words, too many people speaking. The coach has got to be the one person the players he wants, not the players that are bought for him... It's a big difference.

MM: But Shane, that's the way of South African football. Just about at every club, the players are not bought by the coach. Perhaps he makes an input, but the reality is, because coaches come and go, the clubs buy the players themselves.

SM: Not at Sundowns.

MM: They have Flemming Berg doing that.

SM: He works in conjunction with the coach. And they buy players who are going to fit in. They don't just sign a player because they believe he is good. You can be the best player, but if you don't fit into the Sundowns way – playing-wise and culturally, they don't sign you, and that's what I like. But look at what Chiefs are doing. How many players have been brought in over the years that have not fitted in, and some have left? [Khanyisa] Mayo, for example, how long has he been at the club and how many goals has he scored? Why have they brought him in? To score goals, right? But he has not scored the goals.

MM: A lot of your generation and the one before love to use this phrase, 'players are not Chiefs material'. What do you mean by that? The current players at Naturena, are they Chiefs material?

SM: No, this is definitely not a Chiefs squad. You look at the players that have been brought in... A Chiefs player plays in a certain way, they like to pass the ball and knock it around, love to build up. Play football the proper way. That's Chiefs. So, when you buy a striker of pace who needs the ball to be knocked behind the defence, is he a Chiefs player? No, he is not. A lot of players have been bought like that who don't fit into the Chiefs' mould, and that's why I say a Chiefs' player

“A LOT HAS GOT TO BE LOOKED AT. AND THIS MUST NOT BE TAKEN THE WRONG WAY. I LOVE THE CLUB, HAVING SPENT THE BEST PART OF MY CAREER AT CHIEFS, SO I SAY THINGS OUT OF THE LOVE I HAVE.”

has got to stand out. A proper player, not just a mediocre player who goes through the motions, and that is half of the problem.

MM: What's the other half?

SM: The management one I have mentioned.

MM: Suppose Kaizer Motaung were to invite you for lunch and ask you for advice on how to sort things out. What do you say to him?

SM: Exactly what I said earlier, fix the management of the club. Sort out the way things are done at the top and make sure everyone knows their role.

MM: And what do you make of the co-coaching situation at the club?

SM: Co-coaching is hard, although I see it has become a norm now. Personally, I find it difficult. Even if you have two coaches in charge, I am sure there's one who has the final say – you've got to have that. I mean, else, how do you get the message across to the players? And I hope they are on the same page because if they are not, then the players are going to be confused. Looking from a distance, it seems to be working for them at the moment because Chiefs have not been conceding a lot of goals. They just need to get their scoring going because it is not sustainable to be winning matches 1-0. Still, I believe in the head coach system with an assistant helping him.

MM: Thanks for your time, Shane.





THE IDISKI TOP 10... **DERBY PERFORMERS**

This week, iDiski Times shines the spotlight on the men who have made South Africa's biggest fixture their stage: the Top 10 Current Soweto Derby Performers currently lighting up the Betway Premiership in the 2025/26 season.

To qualify, a player must have featured in at least two Soweto Derbies and still be eligible to play in the upcoming clash. In other words, these are not just names from the past; they are the protagonists of the present, ready to shape the next

chapter of South African football's greatest rivalry.

The Derby is not just another match; it is theatre, pressure and legacy wrapped into 90 breathless minutes. Some players shrink beneath its weight. Others rise, demand the ball and etch their names into its folklore. This list celebrates those who have consistently delivered when the stakes are at their highest, the difference-makers who understand that form is temporary, but Derby moments are forever.

Our rankings are determined by overall performance levels, drawing on detailed statistics and ratings provided by leading football analytics companies. Beyond emotion and narrative, this is a data-informed look at influence: goals, assists, defensive solidity, chance creation and decisive interventions in the games that matter most.

(*statistics as of 24 February 2025)

The Top 10:

10 Pule Mmodi
(Kaizer Chiefs)
6.85 average rating

The Soweto Derby has often been chaotic, breathless and unforgiving, yet Mmodi has repeatedly found a way to leave his imprint on it. The winger has featured in five clashes against Orlando Pirates and, although victory has come only once, his individual performances have rarely dipped below par.

Two seasons ago, in a pulsating 3-2 defeat, Mmodi delivered two assists, tormenting defenders with his direct running and willingness to take risks. Even when Chiefs have struggled collectively, he has often been one of their brighter sparks, stretching play, committing full-backs and injecting urgency into transitions. The Derby demands bravery, and Mmodi has never hidden. Whether hugging the touchline or cutting inside into crowded central channels, he has shown that temperament matters as much as talent on this stage.



9 Nkosinathi Sibisi
(Orlando Pirates)
6.90 average rating

Since arriving at Pirates, Sibisi has come to embody composure in the heat of chaos. He has played in seven of a possible eight derbies, winning four and losing three, a record that reflects just how finely balanced this rivalry remains in recent years.

The defeat that lingers most painfully came in the 2024/25 Nedbank Cup final, where Sibisi captained the Buccaneers. To lead your side into a Derby final is an honour; to lose it cuts deep.

Yet that disappointment does little to diminish his consistency. Through various defensive partnerships and tactical shifts, Sibisi has remained a pillar, measured in possession and calm under relentless pressure. With Abdeslam Ouaddou set to coach in his first Derby, Pirates will again look to their captain to set the tone, marshal the back line and steady the ship when emotions inevitably run high.

8 Ashley Du Preez
(Kaizer Chiefs)
6.95 average rating

Since joining Chiefs from Stellenbosch, Du Preez has featured in six of eight possible Soweto Derbies, splitting his results evenly — three wins, three losses — but always bringing explosive energy to the contest.

His most unforgettable Derby moment came in the 2023/24 campaign, when he struck a brace in a dramatic 3-2 defeat, slicing through the Pirates' defence with pace and purpose. Even in loss, he showed his big-game appetite. Last season, he added another telling contribution, an assist in the Nedbank Cup final as Amakhosi ended their long wait for silverware.

Du Preez thrives on chaos; when the game stretches and spaces appear, his acceleration becomes a weapon. Pirates defenders know that if they blink, he's gone.

7 Zitha Kwinika
(Kaizer Chiefs)
6.95 average rating

Kwinika's Derby story has been one of patience and redemption. During his first stint at Chiefs, he was promoted to the senior side in 2014/15, but never stepped onto the pitch in three Derby matchday squads. The occasion passed him by.

Since returning, however, he has firmly written himself into this rivalry. Kwinika has featured in six of seven clashes against Pirates in his second spell, tasting victory three times and defeat three times. Those numbers only tell part of the story.

His growth has been evident. Stronger in duels, more assured in positioning, and increasingly vocal in organising the back line. The Derby tests concentration over 90 relentless minutes; one lapse

can define reputations. Kwinika has shown that he now belongs on this stage, no longer a bystander but a central figure in the battle.

6 Sipho Chaine
(Orlando Pirates)
7.05 average rating

Goalkeepers in the Soweto Derby live on a knife's edge. One mistake is replayed for years; one save can become folklore. Chaine has quietly built a reputation as a heartbreaker in this fixture.

He has featured in six of eight possible derbies for Pirates, winning four and losing two. Though he has kept just one clean sheet, statistics don't always capture influence.

Time and again, Chaine has produced crucial saves at defining moments, reflex stops in crowded boxes, brave smotherers at attackers' feet, and fingertip interventions that have



preserved narrow leads.

Chiefs supporters have seen him deny them at point-blank range, momentum swinging in an instant. Calm, agile and increasingly authoritative, Chaine has become one of the Ghost's most reliable guardians when the noise is at its loudest.

5 Deon Hotto
(Orlando Pirates)
7.10 average rating

If there is a modern constant in the Soweto Derby, it is Hotto. Since arriving in 2020, the Namibian international has featured in all 14 derbies contested during his time at Pirates, a remarkable run of durability and trust.

Across those encounters, Pirates have won eight and lost six, with Hotto central to much of their attacking thrust. While he has yet to score in the fixture, his five assists underline his creative imprint.

Equally comfortable bombing forward or tracking back in a defensive role, Hotto's engine and intelligence make him invaluable. At 35, he reads the Derby's rhythms, when to slow it down, when to accelerate, when to deliver that decisive cross. Consistency is his trademark, and in a fixture often defined by emotion, Hotto's experience has been priceless.

4 Evidence Makgopa
(Orlando Pirates)
7.15 average rating

Evidence Makgopa's Derby narrative changed the moment he swapped Baroka's colours for Pirates' black and white. Earlier meetings with Chiefs yielded little joy, but since joining the Buccaneers, he has transformed into one of the fixture's most clinical finishers.

In just four Derby appearances for Pirates, he has scored three goals, the best recent strike rate in this rivalry. Even in defeat in last season's Nedbank Cup final, he found the net, underlining his knack for rising to the occasion.

Injuries and selection have seen him miss four other derbies, but when present, he has been decisive. Tall, mobile and increasingly confident with his back to goal, Makgopa offers Pirates a focal point capable of unsettling Chiefs' centre-backs. The Derby often hinges on fine margins, and if he plays, Makgopa has shown he can live in those moments.

3 Patrick Maswanganyi
(Orlando Pirates)
7.20 average rating

Patrick "Tito" Maswanganyi plays the Derby with swagger. In four appearances, he has suffered just one defeat — last season's Nedbank Cup final — and even then, he remained influential.

In Pirates' three victories, he was electric: scoring in one, assisting in another, and dictating tempo with fearless creativity. Maswanganyi thrives between the lines, demanding the ball in tight spaces where others hesitate. His ability to glide past markers or slip through incisive passes has repeatedly unsettled Chiefs.

Though he has missed one Derby, his presence when fit has tilted contests. Recently rediscovering his sharpness, Pirates fans will hope Tito's flair and daring once again light up the biggest stage in South African football.

2 Brandon Petersen
(Kaizer Chiefs)
7.20 average rating

Brandon Petersen's Derby record in the Betway Premiership borders on remarkable. In three league appearances against Pirates for Chiefs, he boasts three victories, an unblemished run that few can match.

He announced himself in March 2022 with a 2-1 win, then followed it with two 1-0 triumphs later that year and



in early 2023, keeping clean sheets in both. His only Derby defeat came in an extra-time Nedbank Cup semi-final.

But, he did not feature in the next four clashes, with Itumeleng Khune and Bruce Bvuma preferred, before returning for last season's Nedbank Cup final, another 2-1 victory for Amakhosi.

Four wins in five appearances overall tell a compelling story. This has arguably been Petersen's strongest campaign in Chiefs colours, and with confidence flowing, supporters will believe his calm presence could again prove decisive.

1 Relebohile Mofokeng (Orlando Pirates) 7.25 average rating

Relebohile Mofokeng already carries the aura of a Derby difference-maker. Though he has scored only once in the fixture, his influence stretches far beyond goals.

Mofokeng featured in five derbies, winning his first four before tasting defeat in last season's Nedbank Cup final. He was also an unused substitute in another encounter, absorbing the atmosphere before taking centre stage in subsequent meetings.

In Betway Premiership clashes specifically, his impact has been undeniable. He scored in the last league meeting between the sides (just a week before that final) and was instrumental in another league triumph the previous year. Fearless in possession, inventive in tight areas and brimming with confidence, Mofokeng represents Pirates' present trump card. In a rivalry built on heroes, he looks ready to write his own chapter.

What The List Tells Us:

With the 2025/26 campaign delivering its first Soweto Derby, a fresh layer of intrigue hangs over the fixture. New season, new narratives, and a host of new players on the brink of experiencing South Africa's biggest football spectacle for the very first time.

Kaizer Chiefs have ushered in no fewer than 11 new signings as they reshape their squad. However, three of those recruits — Paseka Mako, Siphesihle Ndlovu and Thabiso Monyane — are hardly strangers to the occasion. They have felt the Derby's heat before, just in different colours, having previously represented Pirates in this rivalry. Saturday will mark a curious twist: familiar faces, new allegiances, and perhaps added motivation.

Orlando Pirates, meanwhile, have also welcomed 11 new arrivals this season, but none have tasted Soweto Derby action. For them, the noise, the choreography, the weight of expectation and the unforgiving scrutiny will all be entirely new terrain.

Both clubs have also promoted a few young players, who could also make their first mark on the Derby.

There is also a sense of transition.

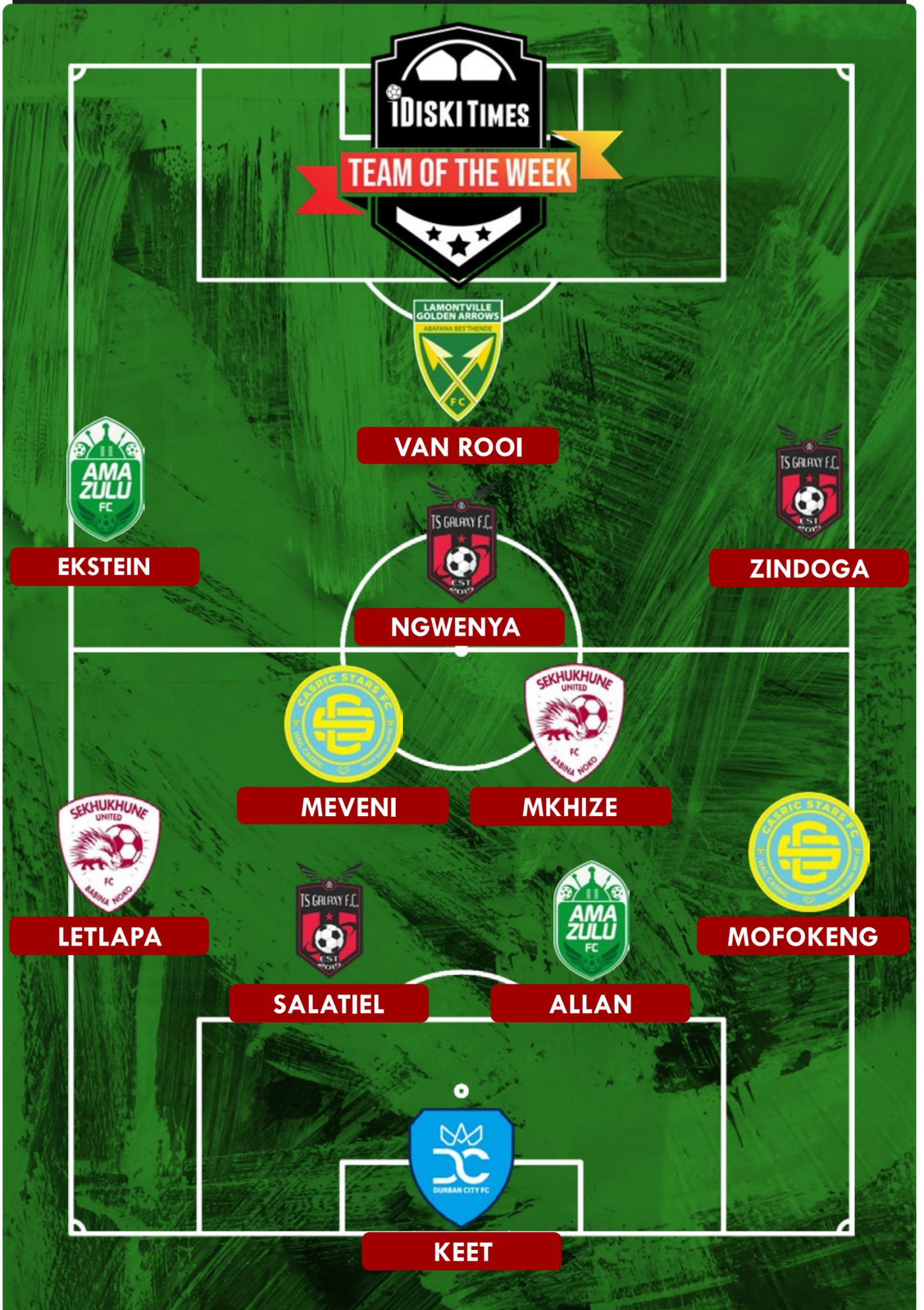
Several recent Derby standouts have since moved on.

Mbekezeli Mbokazi was a commanding presence in last season's clashes, while Mohau Nkota announced himself with mature, eye-catching displays. Former Chiefs captain Yusuf Maart was also a regular standout in the Derby, even scoring the winner in their last meeting, but departed for Austria following the 2024/25 season.

The stage remains the same. The cast, however, is changing, and new heroes are waiting in the wings.



IDISKI'S NEDBANK CUP LAST 16 TEAM OF THE WEEK



ACE OF THE WEEK: THAPELO MASEKO

Our iDiski Times Ace of the Week is Thapelo Maseko, and the flying winger is beginning to make serious waves abroad. Currently on loan from Mamelodi Sundowns at Cypriot outfit AEL Limassol, Maseko has wasted little time announcing himself in Europe. On Friday night, the 22-year-old found the net as AEL secured a convincing 2-0 victory over Enosis Neon Paralimni FC in the Cyprus First Division, a composed finish that underlined his growing confidence. It was his second goal in February, having already opened his account in a Cyprus Cup triumph earlier in the month. Five appearances in all competitions, two starts, two goals, and a young South African finding his rhythm on foreign soil.



The World & South Africa

Over the coming weeks, we'll be rolling out a series that dives deep into South African footballers and their often complicated relationship with playing abroad. It's a story that stretches back more than 126 years: rich, layered and shaped by far more than just football...

This is a history marked by politics, isolation, rebellion, opportunity, heartbreak and adventure. A history where careers were redirected by world events, borders, passports and perceptions as much as by talent. Where some doors opened

unexpectedly, others slammed shut, and a few were never meant to open at all.

There are stories many fans have never heard, and others that time, discomfort or convenience have quietly pushed aside. But they are football stories nonetheless, human stories, and they matter. Together, they help explain the often paradoxical relationship South African football has long shared with the outside world, and why going abroad has never been a simple journey from A to B, but a winding road shaped by who we were, who we became, and how the world chose to see us.

The Legend of Chinchu Guluva

With the Soweto Derby upon us once more, there is no more fitting tale to revisit than that of Kaizer Motaung, the man who quite literally stands on both sides of this great divide. Before he became the founder and chairman of Kaizer Chiefs, Motaung was a talented young forward in the colours of Orlando Pirates during the 1960s. Yet destiny had a detour planned.

Lured abroad, he took his talents to the United States, where he starred for the Atlanta Chiefs in the newly formed North American Soccer League, carving out a reputation that stretched beyond South African shores. When he returned home, he did not simply resume a career; he rewrote history. In 1970, Kaizer Chiefs were born, forged from ambition, vision and a touch of rebellion. In that moment, a rivalry was born that was not just competitive; it became personal, cultural and generational.

And so, every time Chiefs and Pirates collide, they are not only contesting three points. They are replaying the story of one man whose journey gave birth to one of the world's fiercest football rivalries.

A Prodigy & A Pioneer

Born in Orlando in 1944, Kaizer Motaung's story began in the dusty streets where football was more than a pastime, it was a calling. His gift was unmistakable. By 1960, at just 16 years old, the Orlando High School star was already also turning out professionally for Orlando Pirates, stepping into a senior side brimming with stars and expectation.

There were doubters, of course. There always are when a teenager dares to share a stage with grown men. But Motaung didn't just belong, he dazzled. Blessed with blistering pace, a velvet touch and an eye for goal, he tore past defenders, glided through challenges and finished with ruthless certainty. Soon, he wasn't just a promising youngster; he was a fan favourite in a glittering Buccaneers line-up. 'Chinchu Guluva' was born.

While he was lighting up local fields, something ambitious was brewing across the Atlantic. The United States had just launched the North American Soccer League, its boldest attempt yet to establish football on the grand stage. Scouts fanned out across continents in search of flair, fire and star quality.

One of the newly formed franchises, Atlanta Chiefs, staged trials in Zambia and Kliptown. It was there that former West Ham United forward Phil Woosnam, then Chiefs player-coach, laid eyes on the young South African. He didn't need long to be convinced.

Motaung passed those trials emphatically and soon found himself on American soil.

On 27 May 1968, he made his debut against English champions Manchester City, coming off the bench to score in a thrilling 3-2 victory. Weeks later, he struck again against the same opposition in a 2-1 win.

A prodigy at home. A pioneer abroad. And history unfolding in real time.

When Kaizer Met Pelé

It sounds like folklore now, two kings crossing paths on American soil, but in 1968, it was a very real collision of worlds.

Motaung had only just begun his adventure with Chiefs, and had already made his exciting debut against Manchester City.

Then came an even grander stage.

Brazilian giants Santos arrived in Atlanta with their crown jewel, Pelé. The match, played on 28 August 1968 before more than 30,000 fans at Atlanta Stadium, was boldly marketed as the "Game between Kings": Pelé versus Kaizer.

Santos proved irresistible, running out 6-2 winners, with Pelé helping himself to a hat-trick. But amid the samba rhythm and Brazilian brilliance, Motaung shone. Wearing number 24, he produced a performance of authority and elegance,



scoring Chiefs' second goal and demanding attention with every touch.

After the final whistle, Pelé reportedly turned to reporters and asked: "Who is that fellow in the number 24 jersey? I have never seen a guy hit the ball like him. His vision is fantastic. He sees things from miles away... He is unquestionably in the Eusébio mould."

High praise from the greatest of them all. Pelé sought Motaung out after the match, the two sharing a photograph that would become one of the most cherished keepsakes of Motaung's illustrious journey — a frozen moment in time when Kaizer met Pelé, and legends recognised each other.

'Boy Boy' - The Atlanta Star

In America, they called him "Boy Boy." By the end of his first season with the Atlanta Chiefs, they were calling him something else, too: The NASL Rookie of the Year.

Motaung was instrumental as the Chiefs were crowned 1968 NASL champions, defeating the San Diego Toros over two legs in the final. In the decisive second

leg, with the spotlight burning bright, he sealed a 3-0 victory with the third goal, a strike that confirmed a 3-0 aggregate triumph and etched his name into American soccer folklore.

If his 11-goal first season was impressive, his second was irresistible. Sixteen goals in sixteen matches. Clinical. Relentless. Unstoppable. He finished as the league's top scorer and earned selection to the NASL All-Star Team. He was no longer just a promising import, but a headline act.

Yet Atlanta offered more than trophies. The city was alive with history and upheaval. The home of Martin Luther King Jr, who was assassinated in 1968. It was very much a focal point of the civil rights movement. At a time of profound political and social change, the Chiefs delivered Atlanta's first major sporting triumph, driven in no small part by several young black African footballers thousands of miles from home. The symbolism ran deep.

A New Beginning

Off the field, Motaung absorbed lessons just as valuable as the goals he scored:



professionalism, marketing, structure, ambition. The Chiefs were a new club, and trying to win over a public that wasn't historically a football city. The blueprint for what would later become Kaizer Chiefs was already quietly forming, not only in name and colours, but in philosophy and presentation.

So when he declined a lucrative offer to return to the United States in 1970, many were baffled. Why walk away at the height of success? But Motaung's vision stretched beyond personal glory. Back home, Pirates were in turmoil. Internal conflict saw key figures like Ewert Nene, Ratha Mokgoatheng, Msimi Khoza and Zero Johnson expelled. Motaung attempted to broker peace, but when reconciliation failed, he chose a different path.

Out of the chaos emerged the Kaizer XI in late 1969, an invitational side that quickly captured imaginations across the country. Featuring talents such as the exiled Pirates trio, Alfred 'Bomber' Chamane, Vincent 'Tantie' Julius, Jackie Masike, Herman 'Pelé' Blaschke, and a teenage Patrick 'Ace' Ntsoelengoe, the team played with swagger and spectacle. Wherever they travelled, crowds flocked. The football flowed. A movement was stirring.

When the time came for Motaung to return to America, the public outcry was deafening: the Kaizer XI had to live on. It had to become permanent. Motaung stepped forward to lead the charge. Armed with the business acumen and organisational insight gained in Atlanta, he was determined to build a club that

was professionally run, commercially savvy, and fair to its players. Wages paid on time, dignity preserved, standards elevated.

The Americans weren't happy that Motaung failed to return and there was even a FIFA suspension placed on him, after they complained to the world body. Though he would later spend another season with the Atlanta Chiefs in 1971, his heart and energy were firmly invested in building his own institution at home, and his time was split between the USA and South Africa.

In the harshest years of apartheid, Motaung did more than form a football club. He created a brand, a beacon, a source of pride and unity for millions who had precious little to celebrate. Kaizer Chiefs became more than a team; it became a symbol.

The American chapter was not quite closed. Motaung returned to the NASL for two seasons with the Denver Dynamos. No longer the wide-eyed rookie, he wore the number 10 jersey and contributed 11 goals and eight assists in 35 appearances in two campaigns.

From "Boy Boy" to builder of giants, Chinja Guluva's legacy stretched across continents and generations, and still does.

Sources:

- Atlanta History Center
- KaizerChiefs.com
- Digital Library Of Georgia
- North American Soccer History Archives
- NASL-Jerseys



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