



WHEN WILL CHIEFS HIT THE RESET BUTTON?



BENNI ON CHIEFS COACHING JOB & PIRATES TITLE CHASE



SA STAR LINKED WITH LAZIO, PORTO & SPORTING



SURPRISE NAMES IN TOP 10 NEW SIGNINGS THIS SEASON SO FAR



CARDOSO: OUR TOP 3 TARGET HAS NOT CHANGED



SMEDA: I'M DISAPPOINTED NOT TO MAKE BANYANA SQUAD

SA& THE WORLD, IDISKI TOP 10, & ACE OF THE WEEK

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TEAM OF THE WEEK
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MAJOR EUROPEAN SIDES CIRCLING OVER MAKHANYA

South African centre-back Olwethu Makhanya is attracting widespread interest in Europe after a breakout Major League Soccer campaign with Philadelphia Union. Having been central to their MLS Supporters Shield triumph under head coach Bradley Carnell, his agency Centre Circle confirmed to iDiski Times that a move is likely at the end of the current European season. Reports in the USA have now surfaced linking Fiorentina, Lazio, Sporting Lisbon and FC Porto with the former Stellenbosch and Marumo Gallants talent.



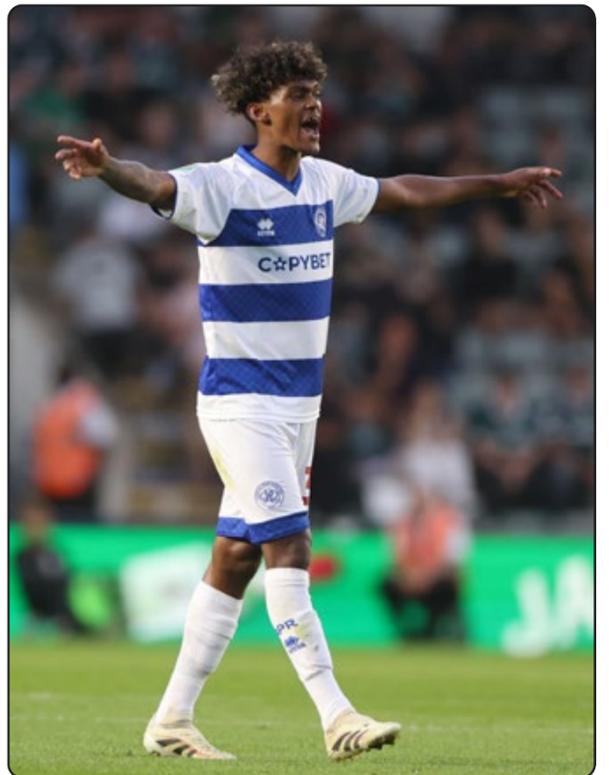
JABAAR OUT OF CONTRACT - STELLIES FUTURE IN DOUBT

In-form Stellenbosch midfielder Ibraheem Jabaar could leave the club at the end of the season, with the player's contract coming to an end. Sources have confirmed there have been several calls across the continent for the box-to-box Nigerian midfielder who's been an ever-present figure since Gavin Hunt's arrival. The 23-year-old joined Stellies in 2021 from Olisa Academy after an impressive U17 Africa Cup of Nations and World Cup, and has amassed 135 appearances with five goals and seven assists. He also spent a season on loan with Maccabi Petah Tikva, where he scored one goal, with four assists in 32 games in the Israeli Premier League.



SMITH TO MAKE FIRST TEAM BREAKTHROUGH BEFORE WC?

South Africa defender Tylon Smith has been informed by Queens Park Rangers that his first-team breakthrough is imminent after finally making his league debut on the weekend, having sat nine games on the bench consecutively waiting for that opportunity. It's been a story of patience for the U20 Africa Cup of Nations winner this season, who has seen several of his peers make inroads into professional football in the Premier Soccer League. However, with QPR just three points away from mathematically being secure in the division and an unlikely promotion run, the club's technical team has issued Smith a promise that more minutes are imminent as they start planning towards the 2026/27 campaign.



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CAN BEGANOVIC STEP OFF THE TS GALAXY CONVEYOR BELT?

There's a quiet irony running through Adnan Beganovic's season with TS Galaxy: the Bosnian coach has inherited a culture built on developing talent only to sell it, yet his own stock might now be the one moving on. With one year left on his contract and the Rockets sitting inside the Premiership's top eight while also into the Nedbank Cup semi-finals, Beganovic has done enough to draw attention — the real question is, who is paying attention and will they be bold enough to call?

Galaxy's current campaign has been jagged. After a five-game league losing streak earlier this month, Beganovic conceded that "we need to change our mindset" and look for "different models for the next 10 games" to arrest their slump — stark words from a coach who arrived with a reputation for defensive organisation and a coherent tactical identity.

Those comments were not the sound of a manager content to coast. They were the sound of someone wrestling with form — and, by extension, form's effect on perception of his work.

That perception matters. Especially when Galaxy's blueprint — refine a player, sell the player, repeat — has already produced several high-profile departures from the club. Beganovic himself even spoke about this model in mid-2025, emphasising the club's role as a production line: "We are a club that produces and sells players," he told this publication. "It's our job every pre-season... we have a new beginning. Yes, we sell some players... because it's the vision of the club."

That's not code for inevitability — it's clarity. But therein lies the duality of his situation. TS Galaxy are a stepping stone by design. In recent seasons, the club has seen talents like Bathusi Aubaas exit to Mamelodi Sundowns, with Aubaas even breaking into the Bafana Bafana squad after his Galaxy departure. There's Khulumani Ndamane, Puso Dithejane, Given Msimango, Kamogelo Sebelebele, Lebone Seema — the list can go on over the players.

And there's historical precedent for coaches, too: Sead Ramovic left Galaxy with his reputation sharpened and moved first to Young Africans SC and then to CR Belouizdad, fanning whispers that coaches can use this club as a launchpad, too.

So where does that leave Beganovic?

On current form, Galaxy's block possesses enough tactical coherence and mental steel to trouble anyone. They're resilient, difficult to break down, and capable of shifting shapes when needed. The Nedbank Cup run, in particular, gives them a spotlight they wouldn't have had otherwise — a chance to show that their tactics aren't just effective in the league but ready for knockout drama.

Yet Beganovic's own comments this season betray a pragmatism that suggests he already sees beyond any single club narrative.

After a string of defeats he was honest,



blunt even: "It's football ... We need luck and honesty with the ball. If you are not honest, you can't expect to win the game."

That's not the language of a coach who thinks winning in South Africa is luck — it's the language of someone who sees football as process over lip service. And process is the currency in modern coaching. Clubs from bigger markets — especially those seeking a coach who can stabilise and develop rather than simply wheel 'n' deal money — tend to value that.

If Galaxy finish in the top eight and make serious noise in the Nedbank Cup, Beganovic won't just have achievement on paper — he'll have proof that his ideas translate to measurable outcomes.

Speculation about interest this summer will intensify if that happens. And the murmurs won't come just from within South Africa. Coaches with UEFA Pro Licences — as Beganovic holds — increasingly form part of hire lists in leagues where clubs want to play their way and not merely inflate their wage bill.

The real twist, though, is this: TS Galaxy might prefer continuity. The club's chairman has publicly endorsed stability in the past, making succession planning sound less like panic and more like strategy. But does that hold if a bona-fide offer comes from abroad or from one of the local powerhouses? And does Beganovic even want to test that?

For now, he's kept his gaze forward — on results, on performance, on problem solving. But football isn't kind to coaches without silverware or decisive narratives. A cup opportunity this season could define his résumé more than any top-eight finish.

So here's the framing: Beganovic is not just managing TS Galaxy. He's auditioning — in full view, under pressure, with every win and loss doubling as evidence of what he's capable of next. And that's exactly how these things get started.

 GO TO IDISKITV


A CUP OF FAIRYTALES DELIVERS AGAIN

The semi-finalists for the Nedbank Cup were decided this weekend, and it was a Last Eight of surprises as two Motsepe Foundation Championship teams, Casric Stars and Milford, joined TS Galaxy and Durban City in the final four.

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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A Cup of Fairytales Delivers Again - Nkululeko Nkewu

"The two standout moments from the past Nedbank Cup weekend were Casric Stars and Milford FC's victories.

"Both clubs are coached by their owners, and both of them knocked out decent

Premiership sides. Casric beat AmaZulu in extra-time. Milford dismissed Sekhukhune United on penalties.

"The FA Cup globally is a competition that puts lower league sides against big pros. It's a competition of fairytales and upsets.

"Congratulations to Dr Xanti Pupuma and Bucs Mthombeni. These guys decided it is not enough to just be owners; they love the game enough to learn it and coach their own clubs to success.

"I genuinely think that Casric, especially, is ready to play Premiership football. They lost in the playoffs last season.

"They defended brilliantly against Orlando Pirates and were better than AmaZulu in certain moments.

"I wish both Milford and Casric could not only win the Nedbank Cup, but also qualify for the Betway Premiership."





BENNI ON SA FOOTBALL, THE TITLE RACE & THOSE LINKS TO CHIEFS

By Matshelane Mamabolo

It is the morning after the successful evening of the Johannesburg launch of his self-titled autobiography BENNI and Benedict Saul McCarthy is bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, on the promotion trail at popular radio station 947.

There's nothing to show he got less than forty winks as he excitedly regales

“IF THEY (CHIEFS) THINK THAT I’M THE RIGHT FIT, OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT, OF COURSE, WE’RE THERE TO HAVE THOSE DISCUSSIONS. BUT, THUS FAR, NOTHING HAS COME THROUGH.”



Breakfast Show host Anele Mdoda and her listeners with a wide-range of tales of his rags to riches rise into being Bafana Bafana's all-time leading scorer, plus the only South African winner of the UEFA Champions League.

Done with the book promotional stuff, Benni was only too willing – as he always is – to give ample time to iDiski Times and reflect on the evolution of football in South Africa, praising its growth while warning that the game risks losing some of the values that once defined it.

Who better than him to do that, given there are few figures in South African football that command the respect and credibility of Benni?

Today, as a coach in charge of Kenya's senior national team – the Harambee Stars – and a respected voice in the sport, he speaks candidly about the modern game. He revealed that he believes the current generation of players possesses enormous talent, yet he worries that dedication to the craft is no longer as strong as it once was.

For McCarthy, the biggest difference between his era and the current generation lies in mentality. Players during his time, he argues, were driven primarily by passion and ambition rather than visibility or popularity.

“Our generation loved football more than being on the front page,” he explains. “We wanted to succeed, to play for the best teams in South Africa and eventually go to Europe.”

That ambition shaped how players approached the game. Football was not simply a profession; it was an obsession.

McCarthy remembers spending extra hours working on his fitness and improving his game, even outside official training sessions. Running alone on the roads or analysing his performances was simply part of the process of becoming better.

“I would go running on my own,” he recalls. “I was always asking myself what I could do to improve.”

Today, however, he believes many young players struggle to maintain that same focus. While he acknowledges their natural ability, he feels distractions, particularly social media, have shifted priorities.

“There's just too much showboating,” McCarthy says.





“Players are more interested in social media platforms about how good they look in the kit rather than what it takes to help you win things.”

For him, football should remain the central focus of a player’s career. Fame, money and attention are all by-products of success on the pitch and not the goal itself.

“Everything you have comes because of football,” he emphasises. “So you have to respect that and dedicate yourself to your craft.”

One of the most noticeable changes in South African football is the decline in players moving to major European leagues. McCarthy believes this is not due to a lack of ability. In fact, he believes the opposite.

“Players today are probably more talented than we were,” he says. “But they don’t dedicate themselves to their craft the same way.”

He argues that professionalism involves more than showing up to training. It requires constant engagement with the game – analysing opponents, discussing tactics, and always searching for ways to improve.

During his playing days, team discussions often revolved around football strategy. Players would talk about opponents, tactics and performances.

“When we sat together, we spoke about the game and discussed the opposition,” he says.

Now, McCarthy observes, many players spend those moments on their phones instead.

“Today, you often see players focusing on their phones. I don’t want to be highly critical of players, but I think they need to seriously start to put football first more because the limelight, everything that you have, everything that’s coming

“PLAYERS TODAY ARE PROBABLY MORE TALENTED THAN WE WERE, BUT THEY DON’T DEDICATE THEMSELVES TO THEIR CRAFT THE SAME WAY.”

to you is because of football. So, you need to respect that a little bit more and dedicate yourself to your craft. Train better, work harder, less time on Instagram and TikTok or create emojis, videos and all that. But dedicate a little bit more to training, improving and becoming better.”

For him, rediscovering that hunger for improvement is the key to South African players once again thriving internationally.

While McCarthy praises the development of the Premier Soccer League, he believes the competition faces a serious challenge when it comes to preserving its history.

He acknowledges the leadership of Irvin Khoza and credits the league for being one of the best-organised on the continent. In his view, South Africa stands alongside the strongest leagues in Africa.

“Among all of Egypt and Morocco, and South Africa, it is hard for me to say who is on top. But I think the PSL is probably the best league in Africa,” McCarthy says.

However, he is deeply concerned about the growing trend of clubs being sold or





relocated, resulting in the disappearance of historic institutions.

Clubs such as Bloemfontein Celtic, Moroka Swallows, SuperSport United and Bidvest Wits are among those that have vanished from the top flight after franchise sales. For McCarthy, these losses represent more than just administrative changes.

“We’ve lost iconic football clubs,” he says. “That history is gone, and they are never coming back. It can’t just become easy to sell, look, Wits University is gone. There’s no longer Moroka Swallows or Bloemfontein Celtic. Iconic clubs in the league, we have that history just gone.”

He believes the league must be stricter to protect the heritage of these teams and ensure that new owners meet strong financial and organisational requirements.

“The league needs tighter control to preserve the prestige of these clubs,” he argues. “We have to have some serious financial backing required for those who buy new clubs.

Would he consider a return to coaching locally? After all, he’s been linked to the Kaizer Chiefs job recently, and while he played for rivals Orlando Pirates, he has openly admitted supporting Chiefs.

“It’s my childhood team that I support, so of course, as a player, I would have jumped if it were that situation. If the Chairman [Irvin Khoza] asked me to join Pirates, and Chiefs came to me. I would go to Chiefs because it’s my team I supported, you understand?”

“But, I’m in a situation where if they don’t want you, I don’t force anything upon anyone. So, I won’t avail myself for an interview or anything. But if they think that I’m the right fit, or something like that, of course, we’re there to have those discussions. But, thus far, nothing has come through.”

“COACH GAVIN HUNT IS AN ELEPHANT OF THE GAME; THEY DO NOT GO EXTINCT. HE’S YOUNG AT HEART, AND PLAYERS LOVE PLAYING FOR HIM.”

But from the outside, can he see what is wrong at Chiefs and how to fix it?

“Honestly, I think you have to be in that environment. You have to be at Chiefs to know what is happening. From the outside, we can speculate. But, if you’re there, then you’re saying, yeah, maybe management ain’t doing this. The technical team, the coaches aren’t equipped enough, or those sorts of things.

“So, when you are in the club, I think that’s when you can probably get a better view and say what is actually going wrong.

“But, for outsiders, it’s impossible to speculate why this, why that. Because the one thing I can tell you is that they are the most well-run, well-organised football club in this country - the support and everything.

“So, it’s like, it’s genuinely watching Man United. Because now I can compare, because I’ve been there [at Man United], and the feeling that you get is Chiefs is exactly like Man United.

“They are a phenomenal football club, great history. They’ve got the fans. The club is well-run, it is well-organised, and they have everything that you want in a football club.

“But, unfortunately, on the football field, it’s not coming together; something is missing, it’s not working. They need to figure that out; they need to find a





solution. Because once they can get that card right, then good luck to all the other teams.

“Where are they now in the league? Fifth, right? So, they must not be bad. They must be okay if they are in the top five in the league. But I think they don’t want that – okay, they want to be challenging for cups. Challenging for the league title, being in a three-horse race instead of just Orlando Pirates and Sundowns as it is now.

“So, yeah, I’m sure whatever coach they decide to get, or if they keep these guys, they have to fix the team. Because that’s a problem, I think. Confidence is low within that football club, because if you lose four games on the bounce, then there’s a confidence issue.

“But players don’t become bad players overnight after four games and that. So, I think they just need coaching. They just need somebody to restore what got them, what got Kaizer Chiefs to want to sign them, because they were good at what they were doing. That’s why they accepted clubs like Chiefs to sign them. So, I think the players just need to find that oomph about them again, what made them special wherever they were, and they ended up going to Chiefs. And yeah, just the belief, man – it’s their belief that needs to be lifted up.”

McCarthy has been keeping a keen eye on the title race, with the Buccaneers pushing Sundowns this campaign. The last time Pirates won the league, McCarthy was part of the team, and he is pleased to see the Buccaneers challenging again this season.

“I think the recruitment and everything has been so much better, and Pirates look like they can make a push,” McCarthy says.

“But, yeah, I think it’s really sad that ... 14 years? It’s been a long time. Yeah. 14 years ago was the last time that Pirates dominated and won.

“Credit has to go to Mamelodi Sundowns. Very nice! Patrice [Motsepe] came in, put the money there, it’s easy. You can get sidetracked, but the way that he went about it, he got the right coaches in, he got the right stability to stabilise the club and to win nine back-to-back. Is it nine times?

“I think it’s more competitive, but then Sundowns have been so dominant. It’s like their recruiting is phenomenal. They are relentless in the way they pursue to be champions, it is also applaudable.

“Like, wow, you envy that because to have that mindset, you win the championship, you win the league, you’re the champ, and a lot of players lose their focus. Now, you think you’re bigger than what you are. Like, you made it, because that’s very common in South Africa. You win one thing, and all of a sudden, you’re the man, you’re the superstar.



“I’M WISHING PIRATES ALL THE BEST IN THEIR PURSUIT OF WINNING THE TITLE, AND I HOPE THEY CAN DO IT FOR SOUTH AFRICA.”

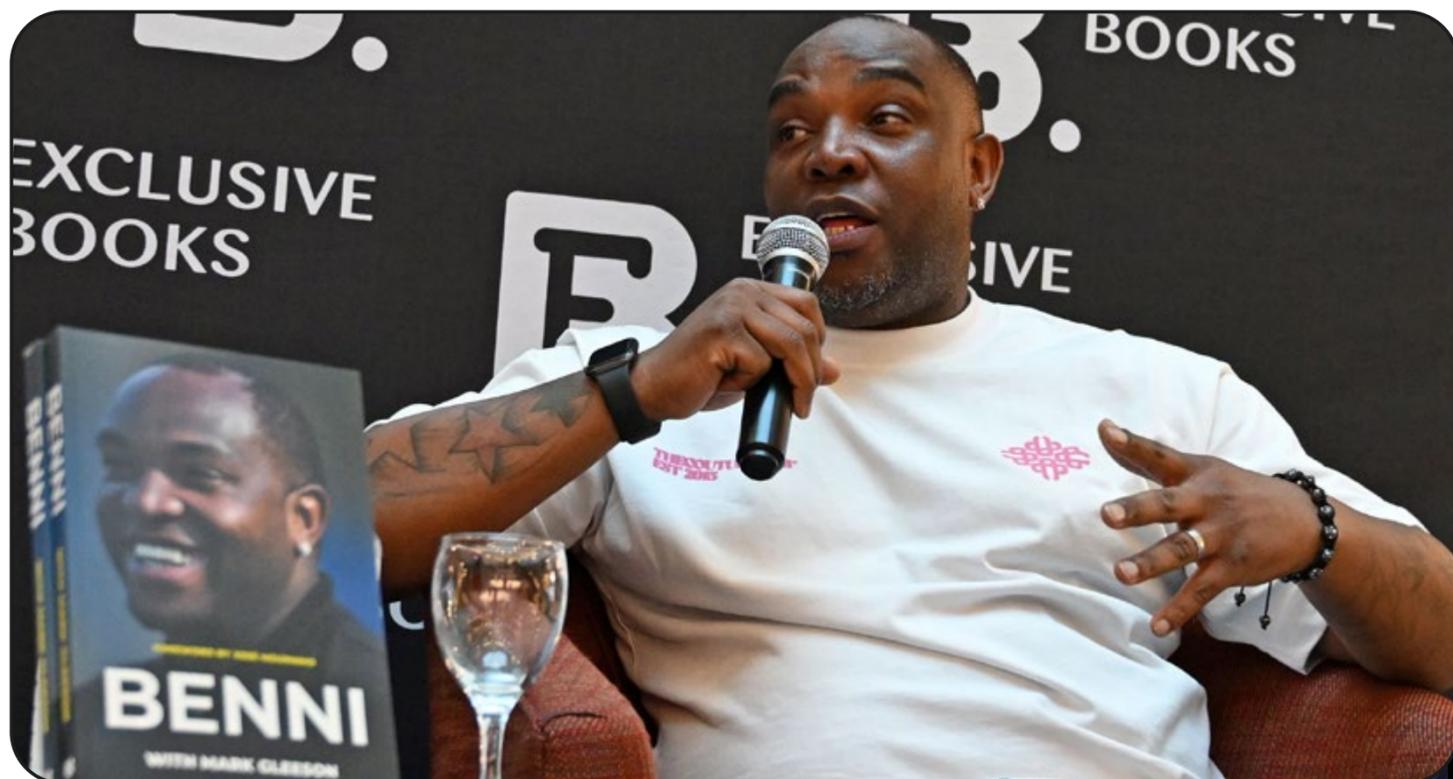
“But they’ve been at it year after year after year. So, yeah, those players, the mentality that they have is incredible, so you have to commend that. And it will be hard for everybody else to be chasing that because somehow it’s harder to win. And those players also know what it means to be a champion. And you can see that they thrive on it, and they don’t want to give that up. So it’s not going to be easy for Pirates to surpass that because they know what it takes or what needs to be done to get over the line, because they’ve been doing it for the last eight seasons straight.

“So Pirates have their work cut out for them, but I hope, I think it will be a good advert for South African football if Pirates can change it up and somebody else can win the league, and the dominance is not so high, it’s always a one-sided affair because then I’m sure teams like Chiefs will also be inspired by that.

“Like, hey, you know what? Our recruitment, whatever we can do, if Pirates can change that trajectory, we can too.’ And other teams will follow suit, you know?

“So I’m wishing Pirates all the best in their pursuit of winning the title, and I hope they can do it for South Africa.”





Another issue McCarthy feels strongly about is the role of experienced coaches in shaping the future of South African football.

He speaks with great admiration about veteran coach Gavin Hunt, describing him as a rare figure in the game.

“Coach Gavin Hunt is an elephant of the game,” McCarthy says. “They do not go extinct.”

Despite some criticism that Hunt’s methods are outdated, McCarthy insists that players still respect the multiple championship-winning coach now in charge of Stellenbosch FC deeply and often go out of their way to work with him.

“He’s young at heart, and players love playing for him,” McCarthy explains.

For younger coaches like himself, figures such as Hunt provide invaluable learning opportunities. Facing experienced tacticians forces emerging coaches to grow quickly. He would also welcome the return of another legendary coach, Pitso Mosimane, whose success across Africa has made him one of the continent’s most respected tacticians.

“You want to come up against coaches like that,” McCarthy says. “It helps you mature very quickly because you know you’re competing against the best.”

The presence of seasoned coaches, he believes, raises the tactical and professional standards of the entire league.

Among the emerging coaches McCarthy admires former winger Daine Klate, whom he played with at Orlando Pirates.

McCarthy reveals that the two once discussed coaching during a visit Klate made to his home in Scotland, a conversation that helped shape Klate’s own journey into management.

He believes Klate possesses the intelligence and tactical understanding required to succeed as a coach.

“As a player, he was always very calculated. He understands the game, tactical positioning, and he communicates

“PLAYERS ARE MORE INTERESTED IN SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS ABOUT HOW GOOD THEY LOOK IN THE KIT RATHER THAN WHAT IT TAKES TO HELP YOU WIN THINGS.”

well.”

Klate has already taken early steps in his coaching career, gaining experience with clubs such as Chippa United and forming the Diski Challenge team at newly-promoted Durban City.

McCarthy believes young coaches such as Klate simply need opportunities to prove themselves.

“It’s about getting chances,” he says, noting that the football industry sometimes places decision-making power in the hands of people who lack deep knowledge of the game.

Despite any concerns, McCarthy remains optimistic about the future of South African football.

Ultimately, McCarthy believes the ingredients for success are already present: passionate fans, talented players and a well-structured league.

What South African football needs now, he says, is a return to the relentless hunger that once drove players to conquer the world stage.

If that mentality returns, he believes the country can once again produce stars capable of competing with the very best.

Stars like himself went to Europe and flew the South African flag the highest, hence he remains as celebrated as he was during that 947 radio show with Anele inundated with calls from adoring listeners wanting to share their memory of a great Benni moment – be it on the pitch or when he simply gave them their time like he did to yours truly for the interview.



'NOBODY IS RUNNING AWAY WITH IT YET'

Almost two-thirds of the 2025/26 Betway Premiership season have been played, but it is not clear where the league title might be headed come the end of May, leading to many believing the race will go down to the wire this term. A sentiment also shared by Sekhukhune United defender DANIEL CARDOSO. Nine points separate Cardoso's third-placed Babina Noko and the top-placed sides, Orlando Pirates and Mamelodi Sundowns. The veteran defender recently chatted to iDiski Times journalist LETHABO KGANYAGO about his side's ambition of finishing in the top three, their last chance of qualifying for a CAF club competition, after they were knocked out of the Nedbank Cup, and what needs to happen for the Eric Tinkler-led side to regain the form they started the campaign with.

Lethabo Kganyago: Danny, we always appreciate your time. Let's get into it. You guys were flying at one point but went through a bit of a slump. How are you feeling about things now?

Daniel Cardoso: Yeah, look, obviously, we started the season off well and then towards the end of [last year], we didn't get as many results as we wanted. We started dropping the ball a bit, but we won our last game of the year. And now we started off the second half of the season on the back foot. But unfortunately, it's football. These days will come. You're not going to win every game. It's how we bounce back. I thought in the game against [Mamelodi] Sundowns, we were very unlucky to concede in the last two minutes in the game; defending for 90 minutes is very hard. But, yeah, I mean, it's not all lost yet. We're still at the top there with the leaders, but obviously, you know, we've dropped quite a few points now. We only picked up one out of nine in the past three games. We went into the last game knowing what we needed to do. We needed maximum points there, and if we win one or two games, we're back up with the rest.

LK: But you look at the points you dropped, that you could literally be a little bit further than the guys that you are competing with at the top.

DC: Yeah, of course, we all know that. It's reality. Everybody can see that. I think even if we had got five points from our last three games [first three of the year], it would have made a big difference. But now we just need to lift our heads, we need a change of mindset and get back to where we were in the beginning of the season.

LK: But how do you avoid that kind of a slump?

DC: Oh, I just think maybe, you know, three games in seven days is not easy. It takes a toll on your body, but we are professionals. We should be used to it. It's nothing new to us. And I just think we need to come together as a team, brainstorm and see what we've done



"I'VE BEEN PLAYING FOR QUITE SOME TIME NOW, AND IT'S NOT THE FIRST SLUMP THAT WE'VE BEEN IN. LIKE I SAID, IT HAPPENS AROUND THE WORLD."

wrong, where we can go right, and just come together again. I think once we start coming together again, things will be different, because we are on the pitch, the coach can only do so much. But it's us as players that need to take the responsibility and start lifting our hands up and coming together and start putting more of a shift in and start showing why we are on the field.

LK: Have you been here before, personally, as a player, and you are also confident that it's going to be all right?

DC: Yeah, of course. I've been playing for quite some time now, and it's not the first slump that we've been in. Like I said, it happens around the world. The biggest teams in the world also go through a few slumps, and it's just the way you bounce back. And I think once we start getting into winning ways again, and start getting that taste of a winning feeling, things will turn around.

LK: At the beginning of the season, everyone was talking about how Sekhukhune is a dark horse. Should that conversation die down, or do you guys believe that you're still in it or can even play the role of a kingmaker of some sort?

DC: Yeah, look for us from the beginning of the season, obviously, every team wants to win the league obviously, it's not impossible. But, you know, we set



ambitions, and we want to finish in the top three. We want to go back into Africa, and if anything extra works out, and we do go all the way, it's a bonus for us. So for us at the moment, finishing in the top three is very important, and we need to start picking up points now, because if you see the league from first, I think until eighth, it's very tight, no one's running away with it anywhere as yet. It's on the day, how you play. I think we've also just been unfortunate with that. But I do believe in the boys, I believe in my team, and I know that we will bounce back strong.

LK: You've been unlucky with injuries to some of your key players. Obviously, you're still without your captain. The other day, you lost Tshepo Matsimbi, as he was just returning, and I think for some games, you were also without Thabang Monare.

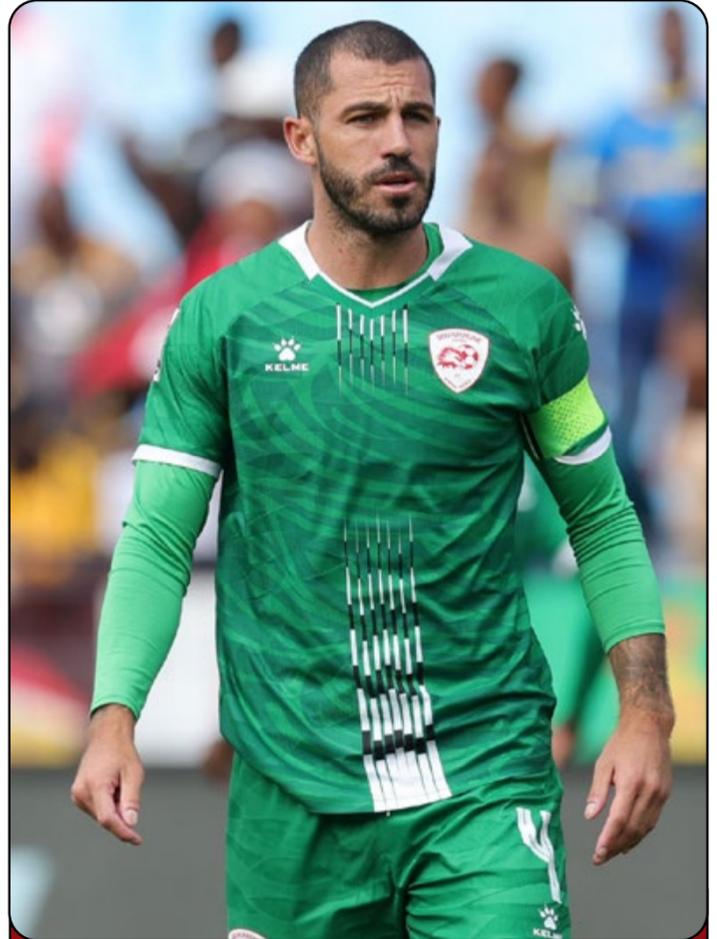
DC: That's hard, you know. I think also, the difference between us and Sundowns was they brought on players that completely changed the game. I thought they came on and made a massive impact, which led to their two goals. And you know sometimes that's a difference. We've got quite a few youngsters on our bench. Energy is there, and everything's there. It's just the experience lacks, and I think that's the only thing that lets us down, sometimes, especially with the injuries, when some of our key players are out.

LK: And I wanted to ask you about some of those young players, especially in the defence, like Thokolo Medupi. How are they coping? What do you make of them?

DC: He's coming well. You saw he started the season off very well for us. I think he's been very decent. Unfortunately, also he has been hit with a blow, an injury. We are just waiting to hear how long it will take and what's happening, but he started the season very well. Look at Brighton Ndlovu. He's been outstanding for us, and that's why us as seniors are there. We try and guide the youngsters and especially the newbies that have come through.

LK: Looking at some of those newbies, what do you feel is the quality they are bringing into the team? At the beginning of the season, you signed someone like Bradley Grobler. We all know how deadly Bradley can be in front of goal, now in January, you signed someone like Lebo Phiri.

DC: They bring in vast experience. Lebo played in France and his whole life in Europe. So obviously, it's a good signing for us, and you could see the experience when he was playing in the last two games. Brad's almost the all-time goal scorer, so that's been helping us. Unfortunately, he hasn't scored in a few games, but I think once he starts getting goals, they won't stop coming for him. I see we've signed [Lesiba] Nku and [Thato] Kiba from Stellenbosch, and I'm hoping they come and add value. We need that extra push, and I think the players that we've just brought in now are definitely going to help us in



"I JUST THINK WE NEED TO COME TOGETHER AS A TEAM, BRAINSTORM AND SEE WHAT WE'VE DONE WRONG, WHERE WE CAN GO RIGHT, AND JUST COME TOGETHER AGAIN."

that regard.

LK: Are you also enjoying playing in front of Renaldo Leaner? He has shown improvement in games he's been playing and stepped up whenever given the opportunity.

DC: Renaldo has done very well whenever given the opportunity, he steps up, and I mean, he's the talk of the town at the moment, and I'm very happy for him. But that's where you got to keep your composure. You don't let the talk of the town get to you, and he must just stay grounded. But he has been doing very, very well, and I do hope that I see him in the prelim squad for the World Cup in June, now when South Africa goes to the World Cup.

LK: Lastly, Danny, obviously, you guys have big targets, like going back to Africa, and the schedule is hectic for everyone. Your team has already felt the brunt in January. Is managing the squad also going to be important in terms of trying to stay in that top half and working hard to reach those targets?

DC: At these times now it's not about training, it's about how we look after our bodies and what we do when we are at home with the families and just keeping sane and fit. I think it's more mental now than physical, and Eric knows exactly what to do. Eric's a very experienced coach. He's won trophies before, and he's guiding us in the right way. Since he's come in, we have improved drastically, and I do give Eric 10 out of 10 for that, plus our coaching staff that's working with him.

LK: Thank you so much, Danny, all the best.





“THEY NEED TO FACE REALITY AND GIVE THEMSELVES THREE YEARS OR MORE TO REDEFINE THE PLAYING STYLE AND WORK HARD TO RESTORE IT”

CHIEFS STILL ON A TRAIN TO NOWHERE?

By *Matshelane Mamabolo*

This is not how it is supposed to be. Kaizer Chiefs are not supposed to be struggling as much as they are.

Amakhosi should not be staring down the barrel of a gun that’s about to condemn them to their worst record run in the Premier Soccer League era. The country’s most-supported club should not be receiving a memorandum from their fans demanding the dismissal of coaches.

Yet that is exactly the situation the Glamour Boys are currently in, the Chiefs management having to publicly apologise for the club’s poor showing and recent embarrassing defeat in the Soweto derby; painfully explain away their clearly ill-informed decision to keep faith with a co-coaching duo evidently out of their depth and who should have left with the coach who brought them to Naturena in the first place.

It would, perhaps, be exaggerating it a bit to say Kaizer Motaung Junior resembled a deer in headlights during a recent interview with the renowned Robert Marawa. But the Amakhosi Sporting Director’s apparent paralysis as he made a vain attempt at convincing that they have a handle on things personified the state of affairs at Taung Village in Naturena. He gave nothing that would have appeased the Amakhosi faithful, instead leaving most worried that the downward spiral is going to continue unabated.

Just last weekend a group of Chiefs fans marched to the Village to demand that co-coaches Cedric Kaze and Ben Youssef Khalil be fired within a fortnight. Motaung Jr appeared to suggest they will probably do so should the duo not win the upcoming home matches against Durban City and Magesi. Defeat to Pitso Dladla’s City on Saturday will see

Chiefs setting a new record of losing five PSL matches in a row. Disaster!

That they were competitive in the CAF Confederation Cup cannot be denied, Chiefs reaching the group stages, and narrowly missing out on a quarter-final spot via goal difference. Motaung Jr strove to push this home – clearly as a way to paint a silver lining of sorts on an otherwise very dark cloud. The reality, however, is that darkness has descended upon Kaizer Chiefs once more, and the man carrying the torch clearly does not have the batteries.

Club founder Kaizer Motaung’s silence – despite Junior’s insistence that ‘the Chairman is highly involved and chairs the board meetings’ – speaks loudly of the sad state of affairs at the club that once dominated South African football and was the standard by which the rest measured themselves.

Last season’s Nedbank Cup victory, which ended a decade-long trophy drought, merely served to paper over the cracks, fooling Chiefs and their fans into believing that ‘the glory days are back’ when it was actually a fluke. The discerning Chiefs fans will remember how the club was on the verge of getting rid of coach Nasreddine Nabi who’d come highly recommended only to have a wretched league season which failed to deliver a top eight finish. The Nedbank Cup victory was but a stay of execution – if only for a little while, because no sooner had the new campaign begun than Chiefs were parting ways with the Tunisian. Incredibly, the club decided to keep faith with the two men who assisted Nabi – the coach himself being shocked that his lieutenants stayed on.

The duo have done nothing but sink Chiefs further, the talk by Motaung Jr of the club wanting to ‘live in the continental space’ being reduced to a dream that will remain just that if not morph into a nightmare. Chiefs have





**“THE NEDBANK CUP
(VICTORY) LAST YEAR WAS
THEIR GREATEST UNDOING.”**

been knocked out of the Nedbank Cup, which could have earned them a return to the CAF Confederation Cup, and the league title is definitely out of reach. A third-place finish could still be attained but given just how poorly they’ve been performing in the league recently, that too seems far-fetched.

With this current campaign looking like a write-off, surely Chiefs should be making bold plans for the upcoming one. And starting by giving a concrete stance on which coach they will be hiring next season would go a long way towards appeasing their clearly incensed loyal supporters. But no, the Amakhosi management continues to beat about the bush – Motaung Jr not giving a clear answer as to whether they are in the hunt for a new technical leader.

Even with Benni McCarthy publicly declaring his desire to coach the club he has supported as a young man and the Amakhosi faithful clamouring for the unattached Pitso Mosimane, Chiefs continue to play hide and seek with their intentions. And they wonder why their fans are frustrated.

Not to say either of those two would be the solution to Chiefs’ woes. But the reality is that Chiefs could do with a shock to their system, and both Mosimane and McCarthy are the kind of coaches and personalities who will definitely inject serious life to Naturena. They are the type of coaches who could deliver immediate success and win trophies, if only to restore some dignity.

But would winning a trophy make Chiefs the big and successful club they used to be? After all, they won the Nedbank Cup last season, didn’t they?

There is a general feeling among the discerning football followers that Chiefs long lost their culture and style even though they were still winning. The Fabric that defined them was lost from the time they hired Ernst Middendorp to replace the late Ted Dumitru and the continued

reliance on European coaches who did not appreciate the African talent like Ol’ Loud Mouth (Dumitru) was the club’s downfall.

Though these coaches won trophies, the argument is that they did so with Chiefs not playing the kind of football that made them the dominant force they used to be in their formative years in the 70s and later when they were the kings of the local game in the 80s and early 90s.

Ziphozonke Dlangalala is one of the most brilliant football brains in the country, whose understanding of the South African game is sadly underrated. A former Maritzburg United and University of Pretoria coach who also worked in the development ranks at Mamelodi Sundowns and Orlando Pirates, Dlangalala has followed Chiefs for years and believes the club long lost its identity and all that’s happening now is the result of that.

“The problem was losing the Culture and the Identity while winning. Today Chiefs don’t even have a player profile. They recruit players and end up with players who have completely different ideas or abilities on the field that no coach can help to gel. They sign the type of players that may never combine due to contrasting playing mentalities.”

The challenge does not only end with the playing personnel though.

“Equally, the coaching profile is not clear.”

As with Spanish giants FC Barcelona, who once went through a very difficult period but then regrouped and worked on a turnaround strategy that saw them becoming a dominant force domestically and in all of Europe under Pep Guardiola, Dlangalala suggests Chiefs need to find themselves again.

“They need to face reality and give themselves three years or more to redefine the playing style and work



“THE PROBLEM WAS LOSING THE CULTURE AND THE IDENTITY WHILE WINNING. TODAY CHIEFS DON'T EVEN HAVE A PLAYER PROFILE. THEY RECRUIT PLAYERS AND END UP WITH PLAYERS WHO HAVE COMPLETELY DIFFERENT IDEAS OR ABILITIES ON THE FIELD THAT NO COACH CAN HELP TO GEL”

hard to restore it. Had they done so, a few years ago instead of hoping against hope, they would be well on their way if not running like a good machine now.”

But how do they redefine it? Which coach do they find to help them with that? And do they just need a new coach for that or an entirely new technical team going all the way down to the development structures?

“From my experience in these big brands, what happens at the bottom [youth teams] has no bearing at the top, and vice versa. It’s just a necessity to have these youth teams, but not a strategy. Chiefs need to have two parallel programs. One, get a first-team coach who accepts that the team is undergoing restructuring and then have special assistants who will work tirelessly to unearth and bring special talents to the first team. Hiring a foreign person who will bring his own crew will delay the process.”

The clamour for Mosimane and McCarthy makes sense given their reputations although Dlangalala believes Chiefs need a coach who will be prepared to do ‘the dirty rebuilding job’ required and says bringing in a big name foreigner like they did with Nabi will not be the solution.

Dlangalala, who currently runs a youth

football development programme named Iqembu leBhola Ingomuso, says Amakhosi wasted years they could have used to rebuild.

“Most people think building something strong is a waste of time. Chiefs should have used those 10 years that they went without a trophy – against their tradition of winning trophies every season – to restore the club culture. It would have taken less than half the time and the culture, with its traditions, would have been restored. Trying to make a ‘quick-fix’, only delays what could be possible. Even now, that risk still exists. They have lost a lot over the years. They need to be given some time to get that realigned and for the brand to be reignited. But they don’t need 10 years to restore their Culture and Identity. With a clear plan and proper personnel, in two seasons, Kaizer Chiefs could be on its way up again and reclaim its real self.”

Although this is not solely a Chiefs problem, Dlangalala says there are ‘natural consequences of removing minimums in football’.

“While results are positive, people think it’s all hunky-dory. For as long as this thinking of ‘it doesn’t matter how you play, as long as you win’ prevails, these kinds of results will remain a possibility,” Dlangalala says in relation to the Nedbank Cup shocks which sees two lower division teams – Casric Stars



“IT IS NOT UNNATURAL TO GET ANY KIND OF OUTCOME WHEN AND WHERE QUALITY, MERIT AND REASON ARE IRRELEVANT.”

and Milford FC – in the semis along with elite league newcomers Durban City as well as mid-table outfit TS Galaxy, with all the so-called big clubs eliminated.

“It is not unnatural to get any kind of outcome when and where Quality, Merit and Reason are irrelevant.”

That analogy is definitely applicable to Chiefs’ situation, their obsession with winning silverware no matter how having seen them lift last year’s Nedbank Cup. Yet the reality was that Chiefs were not ready to challenge the likes of Sundowns, the knockout triumph simply papered over the cracks – fooling them into believing all was well. And until they see what is required Chiefs are likely to remain in this losing train for a long time.

But do Chiefs really not see what is required? After all, didn’t Motaung Jr put his hand up in that interview with Marawa to say he would be the first to admit if he was failing in his mandate as a club director? Didn’t he acknowledge that they let their fans down in that 3-0 loss to arch-rivals Orlando Pirates?

Then again, it is one thing to acknowledge the errors of your ways and another to act on fixing them.

Motaung Jr pushed back when some of the club’s fans complained about Chiefs’ tendency to latch on to free agents – particularly from rivals Sundowns and Pirates – instead of breaking the bank to buy quality players. Yet the reality is that it has been a long time since Chiefs signed quality top-class players. Sure, the likes of Glody Lilepo and Flavio Silva have brought some spark

and Ethan Chislett has shown some glimpses of quality since finally being given his break a fortnight ago against Stellenbosch, nearly a year after joining from England.

Yet the history of Chiefs is that all local and even foreign stars used to clamour to wear the gold and black jersey, and that is no longer the case, given the depths Amakhosi have plunged in recent years.

Motaung Jr is doing his best to fulfil his role as Sporting Director, no doubt with his old man guiding him. But there can be no denying that he could do it with the assistance of an old hand, a Chiefs legend who will command the respect of everyone at the club and even the continent and world over. Someone with a thorough knowledge of the club’s history, the understanding of what success is, given he’d experienced it. Are the Motaungs ready and willing to have someone like that?

From speaking to the club’s legends, the impression one always gets is that their input into helping make the club a success are not really appreciated at Naturena. If that is truly the case, Chiefs are going to remain in this train to nowhere for a long time.

But it should not be that way. Kaizer Chiefs are not supposed to be the laughing stock of the country’s game. Aren’t Amakhosi supposed to be the torch bearers of South African football? Are they not supposed to be the standard by which everyone else is measured by? They surely used to be. And they can go back to being. If only they did things the right way.



'I GOT MORE THAN WHAT I HOPED FOR'

When TS Galaxy Queens winger LEANDRA SMEDA returned home to play in the Hollywoodbets Super League at the start of the last season, she had entertained retirement thoughts, to give it one last run at home. Smeda was in for a ride that saw her become the league's top goal scorer with 22 goals in 28 appearances and was also voted the league's Player of the Season after helping the Rockets finish the term in third position, tied on 69 points with JVW FC in second place. The two, having recorded their best campaigns in South Africa's women's football premier division, were 12 points from record champions Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies. The former University of Western Cape player spoke to iDiski Times writer LETHABO KGANYAGO in this edition about her unexpected night of glory, reflections of the past season under Coach of the Year nominee Sizwe Sibiyi, challenging Sundowns and the disappointment of not getting a national team call-up after the season she has enjoyed.

Lethabo Kganyago: Leandra, thank you for speaking to us. Congratulations on your awards once again. Being the top goal scorer, that's something that you knew after the season completed, but were you surprised to be a nominee and eventual winner of the Player of the Season award?

LS: Yes, I was. I didn't expect to win because the other two nominees, they also had really good seasons. So yeah, I was surprised by the fact that I actually won the category. It's a proud moment for me. I'm really happy with the achievement. For me, the personal goal I set out for the past season was that I wanted to be a top goal scorer, but then I got more than what I had hoped for. So yeah, I'm happy with the achievement and very proud of myself.

LK: 22 goals in 28 matches, that's what? You were averaging a goal a game...

LS: Yeah, I think there was a time where even my teammates picked it up, like I never went more than two games without scoring a goal. So if we played maybe the two games where I didn't score, then they were like, she's going to score in the next game.

LK: That must have been nice to have your teammates believe in you like that, and I suppose, as well, the supply that you get from them to score.

LS: It felt really good having my teammates trusting me so much. I think that also helped me with my performance throughout the season. They were very supportive. I remember at first I joked about wanting to be the top goal scorer, and then they all were like, 'No, don't worry, we're going to help you'. So yeah, I had a good supply from my teammates throughout the season. I think if I converted the other chances I got, I would probably be on 30 goals, but it didn't happen. So going into the new season, it's something I want to improve on. Hopefully, I score more goals than I did last season.



"THE PERSONAL GOAL I SET OUT FOR THE PAST SEASON WAS THAT I WANTED TO BE A TOP GOAL SCORER, BUT THEN I GOT MORE THAN WHAT I HAD HOPED FOR."

LK: There was also a nomination for your coach, for Coach of the Season and a nomination and a win for Dineo Magagula as Goalkeeper of the Season. Do these just sum up the good season Galaxy had?

LS: We definitely had a really good season. The coach has done well. Being nominated also shows that people see the good work that he's doing at TS Galaxy Queens. And Dineo also had an amazing season, so many clean sheets. I think it's the most clean sheets the team has kept since they've been playing in the league, and I think the defence also played a big role in that. I think we had a good season, it's just that after that WAFCON break, when we came back, we started a bit slow. We picked up a lot of draws in games that we should have won. And I think if maybe we had won those games, it would have been a tight contest for the league title. But we will try again this coming season, hopefully we do better.

LK: Which was your most memorable goal, if you can think about it at the top of your head?

LS: (Chuckles) I can't really remember because there were so many. Some of the goals I scored were like very late in





the game, where it looked like we'd be going to draw. But I think it was one of our home games, 90 plus minutes that I scored, and the moment I turned around, I saw that the whole bench was already at the corner flag (laughs).

LK: I think I remember that game you scored from a tight angle...

LS: It was a cross, like the ball kept on recirculating. You know, when you make a run, and then the cross doesn't come, and then you have to drop back again, and then finally, when it came, it came at a weird angle. I think the wind pushed the ball back a bit, and then I was still in front. So I had to drop back and then adjust my body to try and get my head onto it. I think it was against [University] Fort Hare at home. I headed the ball, but there wasn't a lot of power on it. So we just watched it, like, float, float and then I thought it was going to drop on top of the net. It dropped just behind the goalkeeper. She tried to get it, but she couldn't; it dipped just in time. I think that's the most memorable one, because when I turned, I saw everyone at the corner flag already, like, they knew it was going in. I remember I even jumped, and as I went, I came down, I fell and then while I was on the ground, I was still watching the ball, and the moment it dipped into the net, I saw everyone in the corner flag, and I just ran to them.

LK: Finished on the same number of points with JVW (69), but the gap between you guys and Sundowns, it's still big – they had more than a 10 point lead...

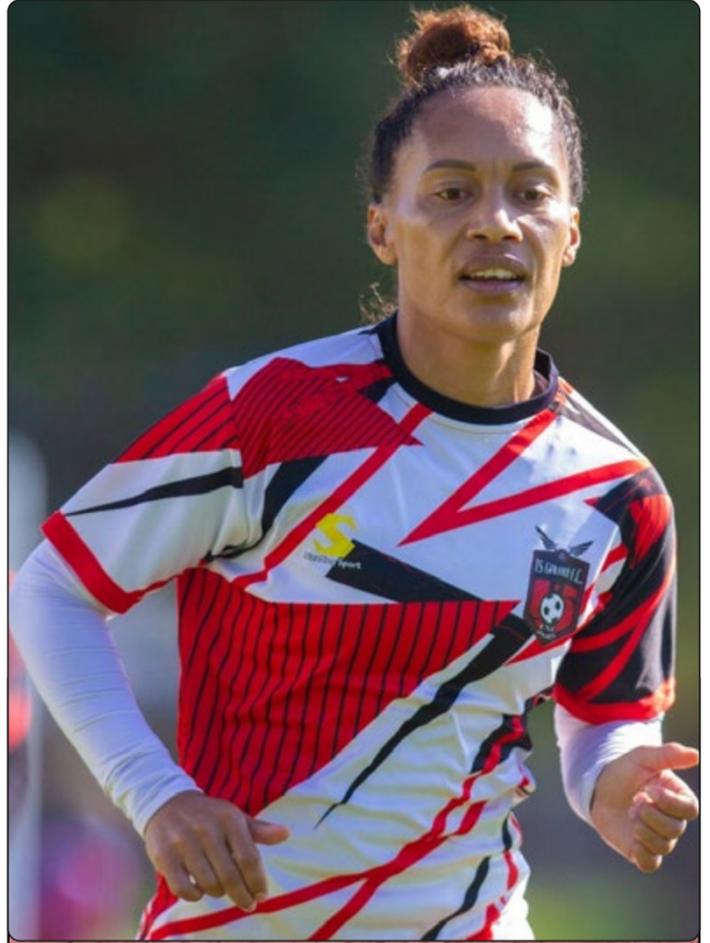
LS: Sundowns, they are very clinical when it comes to scoring. Even when they play the so-called weaker teams, they make sure to score a lot of goals, whereas the rest of us, we will maybe win 2-1, 2-0 or 1-0. They're very clinical in front of goals, and also they know how to win the league. So I think even with them coming back from the CAF qualification tournament [Women's Champions League COSAFA qualifiers] that didn't set them back. They came back into the league and just picked up where they left off, like there was never any panic. So I think with them, it's just the experience that they have in their squad. It has helped them over the years. But also like the teams, we are trying to catch up with them, but I think it's going to take some time, but we are trying.

LK: I think you did try because I remember at some point during the season, you were really neck and neck with Sundowns, the point gap wasn't that far.

LS: We all thought it was going to be a tight contest for the league title, but towards the end, I think we lacked steam, and then they just took off.

LK: Maybe it's also an issue of depth as well?

LS: I think that also played a role. They have a big squad. They can rotate the squad going into games. There were certain games where they would play their bench players and then other games where, you know, it's the usual starters. But



"WE ALL THOUGHT IT WAS GOING TO BE A TIGHT CONTEST FOR THE LEAGUE TITLE, BUT..."

then, even when you look at their bench, they still have quality on the bench as well. And I think that's something where a lot of teams lack, including us, where we didn't have that depth compared to them. Hopefully, in the new season, we acquire some new signings that can help us and bring in also a lot of quality and experience, because there are also a lot of exciting young players now that also been doing well.

LK: About the young players, how much have you been impressed? I mean, among the players of the season contestants was Bonolo Mokoma, a teenager, and I also felt that she did have a good year with JVW. What did you make of the youngsters generally in the league and even in your club?

LS: The youngsters have been doing really well, especially Bonolo, she had an amazing season as well. I think she played a key role in JVW's performance this past season, and there's a lot of exciting players. When you look at the UJ [University of Johannesburg] squad, it's also a very young team. They also have a couple of good players. There's Fort Hare who stayed in the top five for most of the season.

LK: They were a surprise for me.

LS: Yeah, they did really well, and they have a lot of exciting players, especially their forwards. I think they've also been in the national team set up previously or recently, but there's a lot of good young players. JVW as well, I mean, they've lost some of their players now with the opportunities that they got abroad. It shows we do have a lot of quality young players in the country, but I think they just need the proper development. I feel like here at home for us female players, it takes us a bit longer to develop to get to that international standard, but it's better also for them to maybe go abroad at an earlier age, because then the development will be fast-tracked so





much better. Even in my team, we have a lot of young players, like Pertu [Pertule Petersen], Gontse [Homba], there's a lot of potential. And also [Sibahle] Maneli, she got called up now as well. So yeah, it's an exciting group of players that we have, and I think we also have a good balance with the younger and the senior players. I think there's a lot of future stars that are going to come out of the league.

LK: I remember at the beginning of the season when I had an interview with you, you mentioned how you would like a swan song with Banyana. Were you disappointed to have not made the Banyana squad?

LS: Yeah, I was hoping to get a call up now, but it did not happen. I'm quite disappointed because I had a really good season, and I don't know, maybe it's my age. It would have been really nice to get a call-up because even if maybe she [Desiree Ellis] just wanted to look at me, you know, when I'm in camp, because then she can see me up close. But that didn't happen, maybe the next upcoming camps throughout the year, maybe it will happen, we will see. I just have to do my job on the field because that's the only thing I can control.

LK: Obviously, WAFCON has now been postponed. Are you remaining hopeful that it shall happen when the time is right, maybe when there's a friendly.

LS: Ja, maybe when there's a friendly, because when you look at the players before me, it happened with them as well. With Mpumi [Nompumelelo Nyandeni], when she also wanted that 150 cap, they opted to give it to her in a friendly. So maybe coach Des, she'd rather do that instead of using, like a qualifying match or tournament. I remain hopeful that maybe it will happen. But I am disappointed with not getting a call-up, because I think I did enough last season to earn a call-up, but we'll see. Hopefully it happens.

LK: You still have a whole season to see, and it hasn't even kicked off yet. And

“THE ADDITION OF REFILOE, AND I THINK WE BROUGHT IN A BIT OF STABILITY INTO THE TEAM.”

speaking about that, I'm sure you're really just motivated for the upcoming campaign.

LS: I'm looking forward to this season to kick off just to see if I can carry last season's form into the new season. That's the plan for me personally. Right now, we don't know when the league is starting, so that's another issue. But we're looking forward to pre-season. We've been talking about it, and hopefully, they put out dates soon, so we can get into that zone of being all in for preparation. We want to do better than the previous season and try and challenge for the league again.

LK: And finally, head on the block, you were the official Player of the Season, but who was your Player of the Season?

LS: For me, I think out of the three nominees, I would go with Bonolo. I think she had a really good season. She's also been doing well in the national team, as well, and I think she's one for the future. You saw, she also got the Players' Player of the Season. So I think even her peers in the league can see the quality that she has. And I think she's one to look out for the future, that's why she's my Player of the Season. Also, she was chasing me on the goals. She was behind me. I looked, and I saw the remaining games and the goal difference. I was like, she's six goals behind, she won't catch me (laughs).

LK: She really pushed you?

LS: She really pushed.

LK: Congratulations once again, Leandra.





THE IDISKI TOP 10... **NEW RECRUITS**



This week, iDiski Times turns the spotlight on the top 10 new recruits lighting up the Betway Premiership in the 2025/26 season, fresh faces who have wasted no time stamping their authority on their new surroundings.

The list focuses exclusively on players who arrived at their respective clubs at the start of the current campaign and hit the ground running. These are signings who haven't needed bedding-in periods or gentle introductions; they have stepped straight into starting line-ups, delivered consistent performances, and quickly become central figures in their teams' ambitions.

Our rankings are determined by overall performance levels, drawing on a blend of advanced statistics and match ratings from leading football analytics providers.

To qualify, a player must have featured in more than 60% of their club's fixtures, ensuring consistency, influence, and positional impact are all fairly measured.

*(*statistics as of 4 March 2025)*

The Top 10:

10. Oswin Appollis
Orlando Pirates
6.91 average rating

Few signings carried as much weight heading into 2025/26 as Appollis. The spotlight has followed him at both club and international levels, but he has embraced it. With 19 league appearances, three goals and four assists, he has added spark to the Pirates' attack. He also played a key role as the Buccaneers lifted the MTN8 and Carling Knockout trophies. Pressure often reveals character, and Appollis is shining like a diamond under it.

9. Mthetheleli Mthiyane
Stellenbosch FC
6.91 average rating

Stellenbosch have built a reputation

for smart recruitment, and Mthiyane might be one of their savviest additions yet. The 25-year-old stepped up from Milford in the Motsepe Foundation Championship and has looked completely at ease in the Premiership. Across 17 appearances, he's shown maturity beyond expectation, even during spells when Stellies were under pressure. Those who followed his second-tier performances saw the promise, but translating that into top-flight consistency is another challenge entirely. Mthiyane has done so with assurance.

8. Kyle Jurgens
Durban City-loan
6.93 average rating

Once a fringe figure at Stellenbosch, often deployed out of position, Jurgens sought clarity and opportunity. He's found both on loan at Durban City. Given a consistent run in his preferred midfield role, the 23-year-old has flourished, making 18 league appearances and contributing two assists. More importantly, he's dictating tempo and showing the intelligence that once made him such a promising prospect.

7. Sede Dion
Golden Arrows
6.96 average rating

The well-travelled Ivorian has finally found a home. After spells with Marumo Gallants and AmaZulu, Dion's move to Golden Arrows has unlocked his best form yet. In 17 appearances, he has scored 10 goals and added an assist, leading the Golden Boot race despite Arrows sitting in the bottom half. His clinical edge and tireless movement have transformed him from a journeyman into a headline act.

6. Bradley Grobler
Sekhukhune United
6.97 average rating

At 38, Grobler continues to defy time. Injuries may have interrupted later years, but his instinct for the goal remains razor sharp; in fact, in his thirties, he's been at his deadliest. In 18 appearances, he's delivered eight goals and two assists, spearheading Sekhukhune's push for a top-three finish. He may not be the long-term future, but as short-term investments go, this was masterful recruitment.

5. Kamogelo Sebelebele
Orlando Pirates
6.98 average rating

Sebelebele's impact has gone beyond raw numbers. While he has one league goal in 13 outings, his influence has been immense. Add two crucial MTN8 goals and relentless energy in multiple roles, and Pirates' late pre-season signing begins to look pivotal. Whether defending or attacking, he has brought balance and bite to the Buccaneers' title charge.

4. Oumar Komara
Golden Arrows
6.98 average rating

At just 20, Komara has been a pillar at the back for Arrows. Overshadowed in the media at times by Dion and teenage midfielder Isaac Cissé, the Ivorian defender has quietly delivered commanding displays in his 13 appearances. Composed, athletic and improving with each match, his market value and reputation are steadily climbing.

3. Darren Johnson
AmaZulu
7.09 average rating

Johnson's journey has been one of patience and perseverance. Once part of the Ajax Cape Town production line alongside Renaldo Leaner, Jody February and Brandon Petersen, he waited years for his moment. After bouncing between clubs as a back-up, his move to AmaZulu came without



fanfare. Yet with 17 appearances, seven clean sheets and two penalty saves from three faced, he has seized the No.1 jersey, and is even been knocking on Bafana Bafana's door.

2. Darren Keet
Durban City
 7.09 average rating

Some thought relegation with Cape Town City signalled the twilight of Keet's career. Instead, it sparked a renaissance. The veteran goalkeeper has been immense for Durban City, registering 11 clean sheets and producing match-winning performances. Keet has rolled back expectations and proven class truly is permanent.

1. Bright Ndlovu
Sekhukhune United
 7.15 average rating



The former Jomo Cosmos prospect had long been spoken about as a player destined for bigger stages, but the road to the top flight proved longer than many expected. For years, he carried the tag of "one for the future," waiting patiently for the platform his talent seemed to demand. That breakthrough finally arrived after an impressive 2024/25 campaign with Kruger United in the Motsepe Foundation Championship, where he caught the eye. At 25, he earned his long-awaited opportunity with Sekhukhune United this season, and he has grabbed it with both hands. Featuring 17 times under Eric Tinkler so far, Ndlovu has been a steady, commanding presence in a defensive role. Yet labels have never quite stuck to him. Over the years, he has operated as an attacker, a midfielder and now a defender, a true utility man with football intelligence and adaptability. The question now is whether Sekhukhune will continue to harness that versatility, or if this defensive reinvention is only the beginning of another evolution.

What The List Tells Us:

Hitting top gear the moment you walk through the door at a new club is never simple.

New systems, new teammates, new expectations, it can take months to settle. Perhaps that explains why this list is not flooded with youngsters still finding their feet.

Consistency, especially early on, is often the preserve of those with experience.

What is more surprising, though, is the number of high-profile arrivals who haven't made the cut. After a transfer window packed with movement ahead of the 2025/26 season, only two or three names among the top 10 feel predictable. The rest have forced their way into the conversation through sheer output and influence.

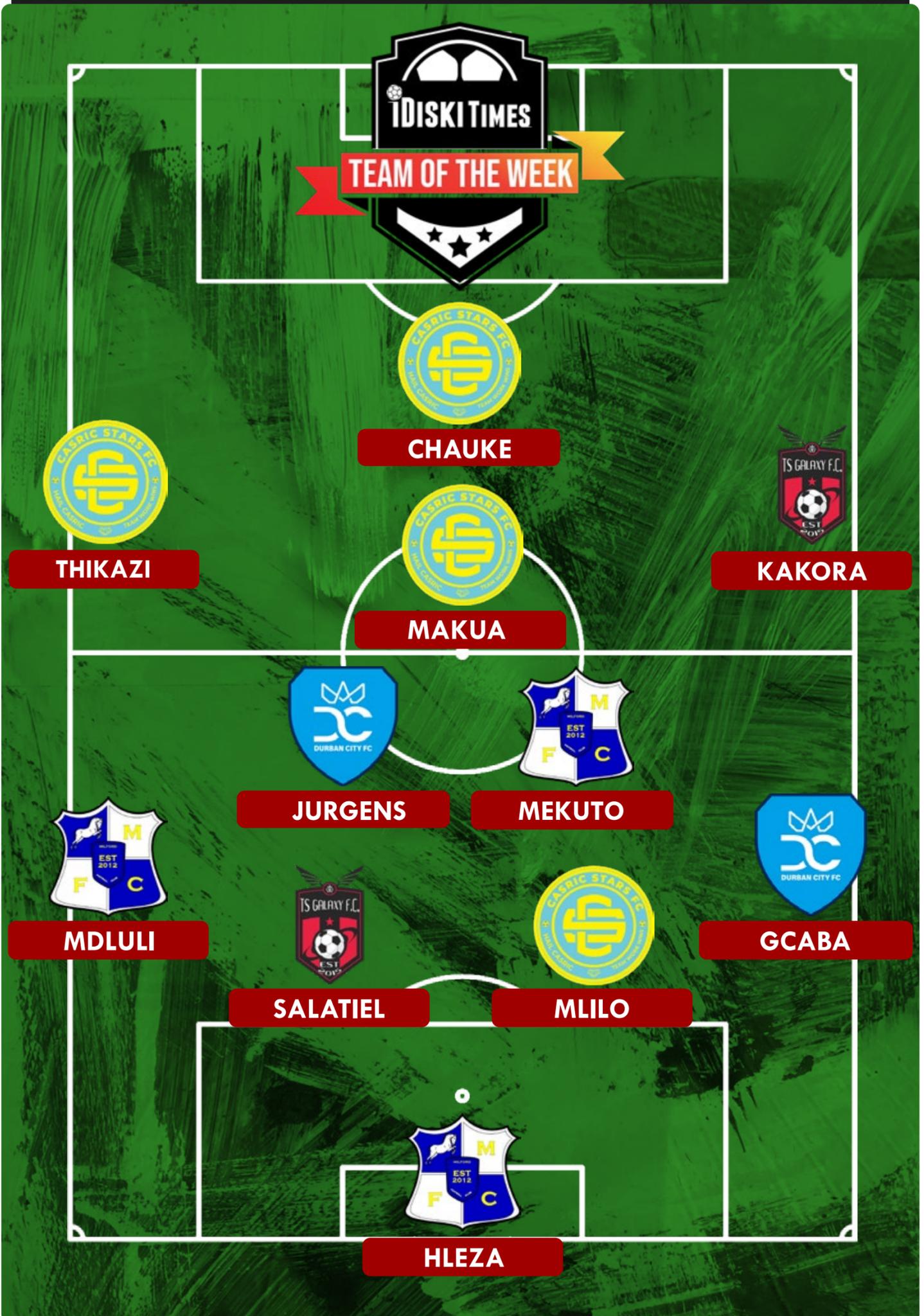
It is particularly encouraging to see Ndlovu and Mthiyane, both standout performers in the Motsepe Foundation Championship last season, proving that the second tier remains fertile ground for smart recruitment.

Meanwhile, Sekhukhune and Arrows will be smiling at their business. Grobler and Dion have not only justified their signings, but have taken centre stage in the Betway Premiership Golden Boot race, with the Ivorian currently two goals ahead of Grobler.

There are a few players who should get special mentions, as they could be on this list soon with a little more game-time.

Harold Majadibodu (Chippa United), Paseka Mako and Thabiso Monyane (both Kaizer Chiefs), Medupi Thokolo (Sekhukhune), and Sihle Nduli (Pirates) have all adapted well to their new surroundings, but didn't reach the 60% threshold.

IDISKI'S NEDBANK CUP LAST 8 TEAM OF THE WEEK



**ACE OF THE WEEK:
THEMBINKOSI LORCH**

Our iDiski Times Ace of the Week goes to Thembinkosi Lorch, who has hit the ground running since making the switch from Wydad AC to Al Ittihad in Libya. The former Orlando Pirates and Mamelodi Sundowns star's revival in North Africa has been impressive, and last Friday, the 32-year-old scored his second goal in all competitions for his new club, as they hammered Al Shomooa 4-1 in the Libyan Premier League. The victory, Al Ittihad's fourth in a row in the league, means they are comfortably at the top of the table, nine points clear of Olympic Azzawiya, who are second.



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.

Anele Ngcongca - Gone Too Soon

By Rob Delpont

Everyone who crossed paths with Anele Ngcongca carries a story. The late Bafana Bafana right-back was the kind of man who was larger than life without ever trying to be, mischievous smile always at the ready, generous with his time, and blessed with a rare football intelligence that matched his physical gifts.

Jovial and warm, yet fiercely competitive once he crossed the white line, Anele left an imprint wherever he went.

My own interactions with him were limited to his times back in South Africa, but they were unforgettable. Within minutes, he had you laughing. Within an hour, it felt like you'd known him for years. That was his magic. He could connect deeply and instantly. No airs, no ego. And despite everything he achieved, he remained disarmingly humble, always deflecting praise and shining the light on others.

Born in Gugulethu in 1987, Anele's journey began on dusty community pitches with Aces United before Colin Gie spotted something special. Gie brought him to FC Fortune, the ambitious club he co-founded with Manchester United midfielder Quinton Fortune. Fortune became a player Anele idolised. Fortune's path to Europe planted the seed; Anele believed he could follow it.

At FC Fortune, he was also enrolled at Simonstown School, another of those small, personal connections that made conversations with him so easy, as I had taught at the school several years before he attended.

"It started from Quinton, actually," Anele said to me a decade ago, as he remembered those early days.

"Giving me the platform, and without him, giving me the opportunity to be in Simonstown School. You know, I'd never heard about Simonstown, but I'm from Cape Town, and I had the opportunity to go study in Simonstown with Quinton's fundings.

"For me, also my dream to play in Europe, and with my hard working and dedication and determination, that's where it put me, and I'm very happy and proud of myself also."

Even as a teenager in the National First Division, he stood out. Composed, fearless, but equally comfortable stepping forward with the ball, he quickly became one of the most talked-about young players in the Cape. But he wasn't looking at moving to a bigger club locally.

"Sometimes we have to look, not on our feet, we have to look above the sea and so on," Anele philosophised.

"And we need to see the big picture, you know. I never dreamed of playing in the PSL. I always dreamt of playing in Europe. Europe has been something that I always watched on television. And growing up watching Man United and watching Quinton Fortune as a role

model.

"I mean, it was something that I wanted, and I never thought in my mind that I would play for Kaizer Chiefs or Pirates or any team, and that is it."

In 2006, still just 19, he trained for nearly two weeks with Arsène Wenger's Arsenal. By all accounts, he impressed. But football can be cruel in its bureaucracy, and work permit regulations stood in the way. An uncapped South African without European ancestry, he didn't qualify. Wenger, though, sent a glowing letter of recommendation, convinced the young defender would find his stage.

He did.

In 2007, Belgian giants Genk signed him, and it would become a love story that lasted nearly a decade. Europe was no holiday; it demanded adaptation, resilience and mental steel. Anele embraced it. He learned the language, absorbed the culture, and fought for his place. By his second season, he had broken through, and soon he wasn't just in the team; he was indispensable.

"You know, the first thing is just to make sure that you mingle with the people, and to express yourself with your surroundings," Anele told me when I asked him about adapting to Europe.

"I mean, players, your teammates should be your best friends, your teammates should be everything!

"And make sure that you ask as much information as you can get from your teammates.

"Of course, discipline won't fail you, and if you've got the discipline, there's no way you can go wrong. And I mean that discipline will even take you to great things.

"Without discipline, we should know that you might have a talent, but if you don't have that discipline, there's no way you're going."

Over nine seasons, he made almost 300 appearances, won the Belgian Pro



League title, lifted two Belgian Cups, the Belgian Super Cup and captained the side. He played in European competitions, testing himself against elite opposition, earning respect for his consistency and professionalism.

In Genk, Anele didn't just succeed; he became family. So much so that after his passing, the club retired his number 16 shirt in his honour, a tribute reserved for the truly beloved.

"In total, 'Jongie' played in blue and white 279 times. Only Thomas Buffel has managed to collect more appearances for Genk," the club said in a tribute in 2023.

"He played every time with the same passion for football, and occasionally with a bit of spirited celebration. He was also able to put the game into perspective, in a philosophical way, but we never thought he would show us that it would become quite so relative on that one black day. We will always remember him as a great player, a wonderful person and a very great Genkie."

While building his reputation in Belgium, he was also anchoring Bafana Bafana's right flank. Between 2009 and 2016, he earned 51 official caps, serving under five different national coaches, a testament to his reliability and quality.

He debuted against Japan, featured at the 2010 FIFA World Cup on home soil, and for years made the right-back position his own. At his peak, alongside the late Sizwe Motaung, he stood among the finest ever to wear that jersey.

His final European chapter came with a loan to ESTAC Troyes in France. It was a difficult season as the club battled relegation, but even in adversity, Anele carried himself with dignity.

He returned home to reunite with Pitso Mosimane at Mamelodi Sundowns, adding more silverware to his collection: two league titles, two domestic cups and the CAF Super Cup. Though he narrowly missed being part of Sundowns' Champions League-winning squad on the pitch, he remained a valued presence in the group.

"I think you know my heart and feelings about Anele. He is one of the most underrated right-backs in the country," Mosimane said in 2020.

"Anele can play against a speedy winger, a strong winger, anything. Anele has a sense of positioning himself and he does not even make a lot of tackles if you can see."

"He is experienced, the guy played in the Champions League in Europe and the guy has won

many titles in Europe. I always root for him because he is one of the most underrated players. He does not get the praise that he deserves."

In 2020, just after Mosimane's departure to Al Ahly, Anele prepared to join AmaZulu on loan and begin a new chapter, but tragedy struck.

Anele Ngcongca was killed in a motor accident at just 33 years old. EVERYONE who knew him mourned.

"Anele was almost like a little brother," Quinton Fortune told this publication a few years ago.

"Colin was the one who found him and introduced me to him at FC Fortune. He was like 13 or 14.

"I was so happy, because he was exactly why we started FC Fortune, that was my idea behind it, to find young players and give them an opportunity like I was given.

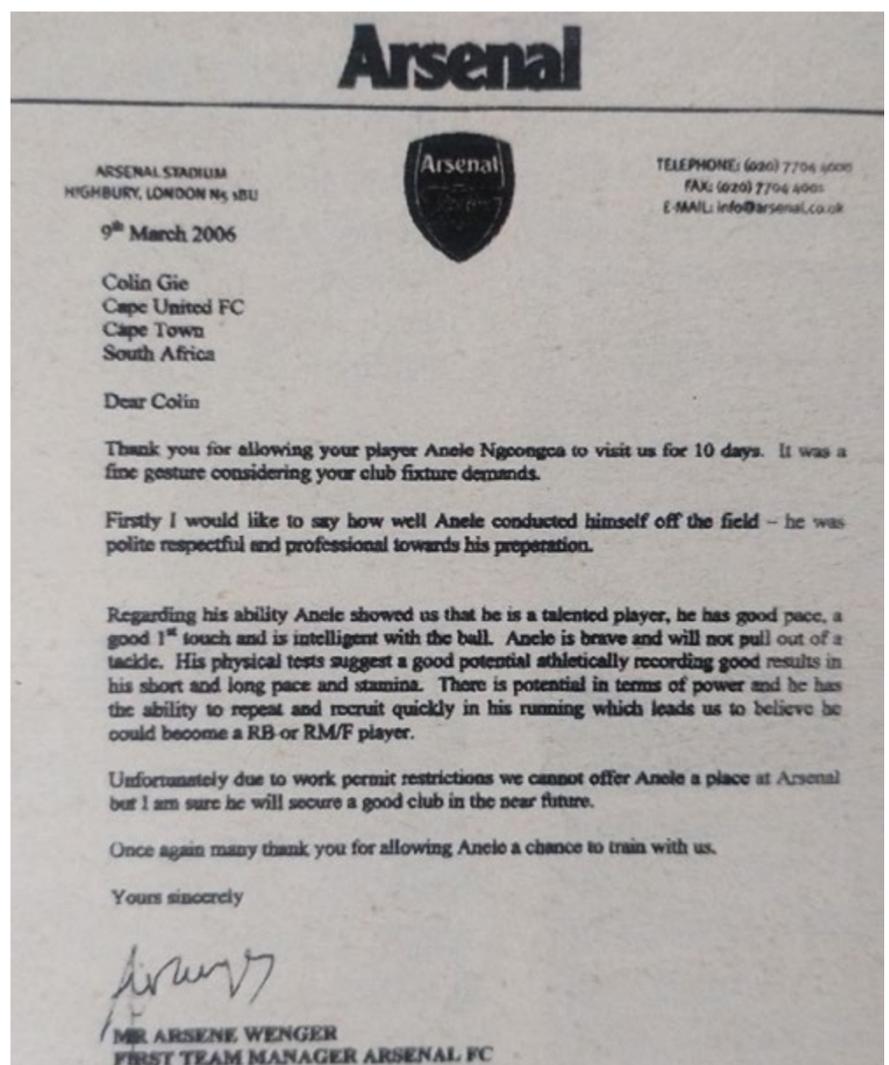
"You know I played against Anele in Belgium, which was crazy, it was a special moment, we looked at each other on the football pitch, and said here we are.

"It was amazing, a really beautiful moment, and I wish I had a picture of that moment.

"Just an amazing guy, and the life that he had, the journey, and to play in Europe, and for the national team. It was beautiful, beautiful. And the sad part is that he lost his life.

"I'm still in such disbelief, because he was such a good guy, such a good kid. Such a good kid..."

Gone too soon. But never forgotten. A Gugulethu boy who conquered Europe, served his country with distinction, and never lost his smile.



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