



# PIRATES VS DOWNS - ANY SLIP UP COULD DECIDE TITLE RACE



## WHAT CHIEFS MUST DO TO NOT JUST DOMINATE ON POWERPOINT



**KLATE: I WANT TO GET TO WHERE PITSO & COACH GAVIN GOT**



**SIRINO FUTURE UNCERTAIN AT CHIEFS**



**EX-CHAMPIONS LEAGUE WINNER KEEN ON BAFANA STAR**



**TOP 10 MOST SUCCESSFUL CURRENT SA COACHES**

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

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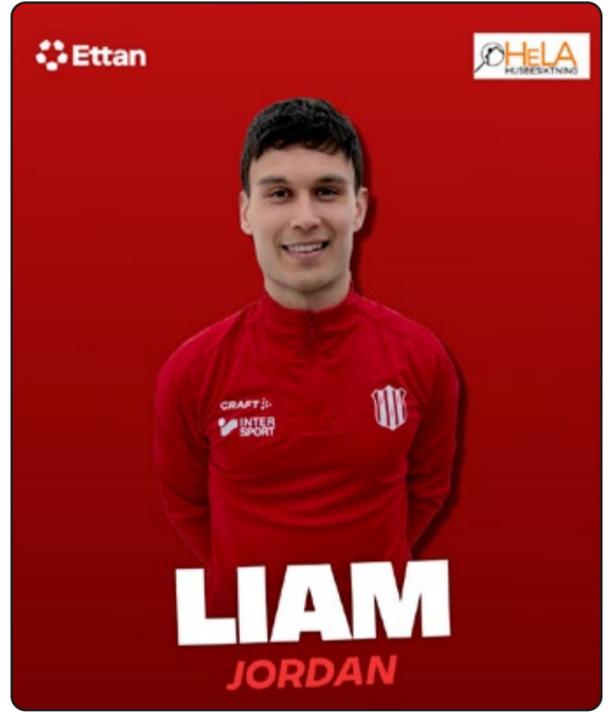
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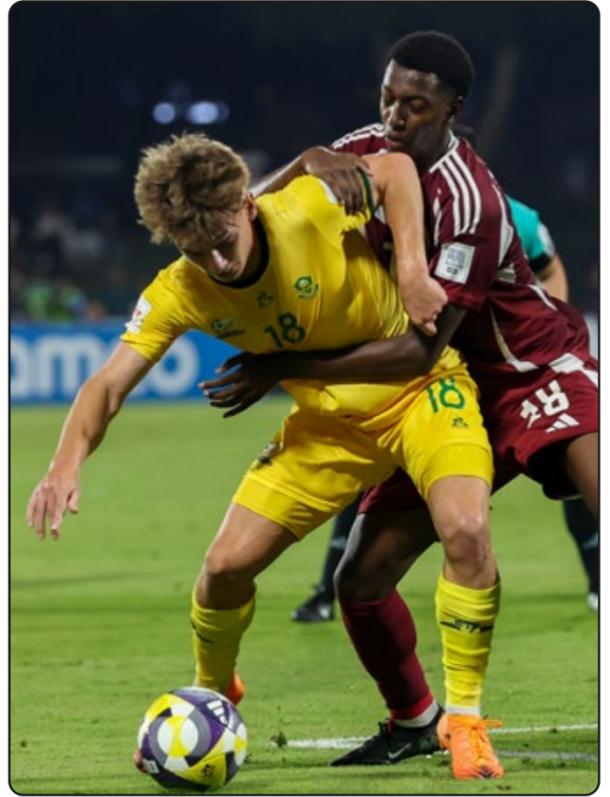
FORMER AMAJITA STAR FINDS NEW CLUB

Former South African youth international Liam Jordan has a new club, having joined Swedish second division club Piteå IF after leaving IF Brommapojkarna last year. Now 27, Jordan has spent the past decade in Europe after leaving Bidvest Wits for Sporting in Portugal. But it was in Denmark where he spent most of his time, playing for Herfølge Boldklub Køge for four seasons, and three at Football Club Helsingør. Now the striker-come-winger will look to help Piteå as they push for promotion. Jordan has four Bafana caps, having been a member of COSAFA squads in 2017 and 2019.



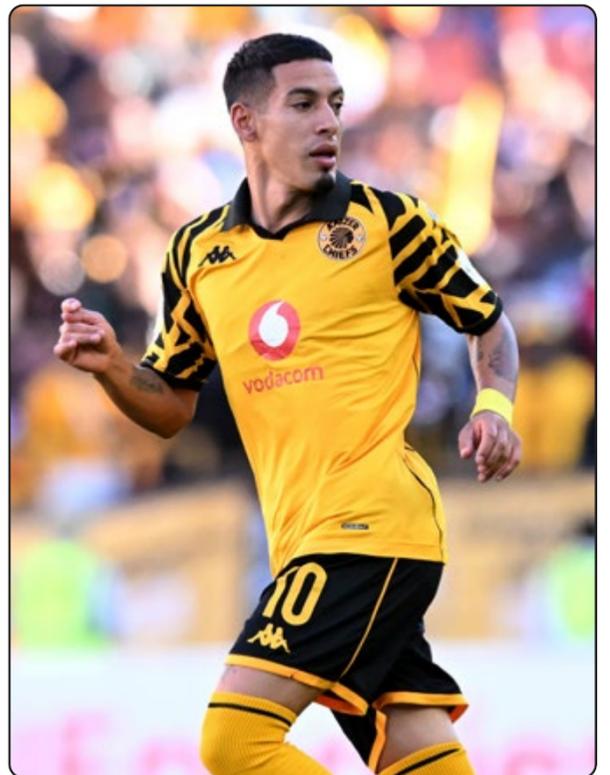
PIRATES LURE PROMISING STRIKER INTO DDC

Orlando Pirates have managed to secure former SuperSport United academy star Will Henson into their DStv Diski Challenge squad. The U17 international striker, who is a product of the SuperSport Academy and Soccer Schools programme, which has now been taken over by Mamelodi Sundowns, has been one of the most prolific strikers in the Gauteng Development League. And with the transition into Siwelele, it's been an opportunity for several clubs in Gauteng to potentially lure the teenage talent into their ranks. After making his DDC debut last weekend, Henson will now be aiming to follow the likes of Relebohile Mofokeng, Mohau Nkota and Mbekezeli Mbokazi as talents who developed swiftly from the reserve team to Pirates first team stars.



CHIEFS TO MOVE ON FROM SIRINO?

Kaizer Chiefs appear set to move on from Gaston Sirino at the end of the season with his two-year deal running to an end. The 35-year-old playmaker joined as a free agent last season after his exit from Mamelodi Sundowns, where he was one of the most fearsome playmakers in the league. And his return of four goals and six assists in 25 games, as they won the Nedbank Cup, where he scored in the final against Orlando Pirates, made for impressive viewing. However, his role has diminished with Mduduzi Shabalala preferred as 10, while Ethan Chislett and others having also come into the picture.



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## PANATHINAIKOS STILL KEEN ON BAFANA DEFENDER

***Bafana Bafana defender Samukele Kabini has continued to attract interest around Europe after an impressive 12 months in Norway at Molde FK.***

The 21-year-old Kabini joined the Eliteserien club in March 2025 from TS Galaxy in a reported R15-million transfer, and emerged as a leading figure in the Norwegian club's defence, featuring 24 times, with two goals and four assists, primarily as a left-back in a back four.

His form in Scandinavia attracted the attention of Hugo Broos, and he has since been capped four times by the senior national team since making his debut against Mozambique last October. He was once again named in the provisional squad for this month's two international friendlies against Panama, scheduled for Durban and Cape Town.

iDiski Times previously reported there

were offers from a Bundesliga club in January, and now it has also emerged that Greek Super League giants Panathinaikos also failed in their mid-season pursuit of the promising talent.

Sources have confirmed that head coach Rafael Benitez viewed Kabini as a signing that could develop quickly into a first-team regular and moved swiftly due to the interest in Germany.

And after coming in with an opening bid of €850,000 (R16m) with add-ons, Molde informed them that he was not for sale, but as talks continued, they set their asking price at €2-million (R38m) incl. add-ons, which eventually saw the deal fall through in the closing days of the January window.

Kabini is now set to stay at the club until at least the 2026 FIFA World Cup, where he's likely to form part of Broos' squad in North America in June-July.

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## ‘BUCS CAN’T AFFORD TO DROP POINTS IN TITLE RACE’

*While Mamelodi Sundowns were in CAF Champions League action, Orlando Pirates missed an opportunity to keep control of the Betway Premiership race, as they drew 1-1 with Sivelele on Saturday, leaving Sundowns with an opportunity to move ahead of them if they beat Marumo Gallants midweek.*

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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### **Pirates Can't Afford To Drop Points in Title Race - Tso Vilakazi**

"I thought Orlando Pirates were extremely unlucky not to win the game against Sivelele.

"Pirates created plenty of chances, and they should have scored more than the solitary goal they scored.

"Upfront, Orlando Pirates use Evidence Makgopa or Yanela Mbuthuma. These two strikers don't score enough goals for the team.

"Combined, they don't normally have 10 or more goals. It's difficult to win the Championship with such strikers.

"Yes, they create chances for their teammates by drawing defenders, but they are still expected to score.

"Dr Irvin Khoza used to tell us that when you are a hero, everyone wants to bring you down.

"Pirates players need to play every match like it is a final. Sundowns are not dropping points.

"This marathon is not over, but Pirates can't afford to drop too many points."







# WHAT CHIEFS MUST DO TO NOT JUST DOMINATE ON POWERPOINT

By Rob Delpont

*Most press media days at football clubs follow a familiar script: the head coach fields questions, a couple of players offer the standard responses, and the session ends with polite handshakes and hurried deadlines. Last week's gathering at Kaizer Chiefs, however, looked very different.*

There were layers to it. Communications

Manager Vina Maphosa read a club statement addressing the fallout from the weekend before, when frustrated supporters had marched on the gates of Naturena Village to voice their displeasure.

Then, when it was his turn to speak, one of the club's embattled co-coaches, Cedric Kaze, did something unusual in football media briefings: he gave a 'PowerPoint presentation'.

It was signs of a club trying to explain itself.

Chiefs have endured a bruising few weeks. Yet rewind to the turn of the year, and the mood around Amakhosi was markedly different. There was cautious optimism among supporters. The team was within touching distance of the leaders in the Betway Premiership, they remained alive in the group stages of the CAF Confederation Cup, and they were preparing to defend the Nedbank Cup trophy they had lifted the previous season, the silverware that had finally ended their long, painful drought.

On paper, the picture looked promising. Even the coaching shake-up seemed manageable. Head coach Nasreddine Nabi had been shown the door, leaving his assistants, Kaze and Khalil Ben Youssef, to steady the ship. It looked like a successful mutiny.

The Nabi era itself had always been an intriguing, if uneasy, chapter. When he arrived in 2024, the Tunisian had been presented as a potential saviour tasked with restoring Chiefs' identity and returning them to the summit of South African football, and he did deliver something tangible: the Nedbank Cup triumph that finally broke the club's decade-long wait for major silverware.

Yet the relationship never quite felt settled. Nabi often seemed to be searching for validation, and the distance between coach and club culture sometimes showed. Every press conference required a translator, every explanation passed through an intermediary. In a football environment built on connection and emotion, he occasionally appeared more like a tourist passing through than a figure laying down long-term foundations.

Still, when the domestic season paused for the Africa Cup of Nations, optimism began to creep into the conversation around Naturena. Supporters and those working at the club allowed themselves to dream a little. The idea that Chiefs might compete for trophies again no longer sounded fanciful. Some even whispered about a genuine title challenge.

**ERTUGRAL: "WHEN DID CHIEFS, A STRONG FOOTBALL FAMILY, BEGIN DRIFTING AWAY FROM ITS OWN LEGACY?"**





But football has a ruthless way of correcting narratives.

Chiefs, in truth, had been flattering to deceive. By that point in the league campaign, they had suffered only one defeat, an impressive statistic at first glance, but they had also managed just six wins from 13 Premiership matches, five of which were by a 1-0 scoreline. In continental competition, their record was similarly mixed, with just two victories in 2025 in CAF Confederation Cup games. While things were steadily improving, there was still a lot of work to be done.

January initially even suggested those early inconsistencies might be fading. Chiefs strung together two more wins in the Premiership and three in the Confederation Cup – performances that hinted the team might finally be finding rhythm.

Then the momentum evaporated.

Stellenbosch knocked them out of the Nedbank Cup, abruptly ending their hopes of defending the trophy that had meant so much to the club's recent history. Soon after, Egyptian giants Zamalek SC extinguished their continental ambitions by eliminating them from the Confederation Cup.

The damage did not stop there. Back in the league, three consecutive defeats followed. Among them was the most painful blow of all, a humbling 3-0 loss in the Soweto Derby.

That run of defeats finally came to an end on Sunday when Glody Lilepo fired in the winner for a hard-fought 1-0 victory over Durban City at the FNB Stadium, but it is unlikely to stop the scrutiny.

In December, Chiefs had been only four points behind their old rivals, Orlando Pirates, in the standings. By March, that gap has ballooned to 15, albeit having two games in hand.

And so, when the media gathered at Naturena last week, the 'PowerPoint slides' and carefully prepared statements were about more than just explaining tactics or results. They were the language of a club

**ERTUGRAL:  
“WE ALL GREW  
THROUGH OUR  
VALUES IN THE  
PAST WHO  
SERVED THIS  
CLUB. AND CHIEFS  
WILL ONLY MOVE  
FORWARD BY  
PROTECTING  
THEIR VALUES.”**

trying to regain control of a story that had quickly spun away from them.

Everyone, it seems, is reacting with heightened emotion at the moment — the supporters, the pundits, the media, and even the club itself. The volume of the conversation has risen dramatically, and with it the sense of frustration and impatience.

More voices began to enter the conversation. Former players and coaches of Chiefs stepped forward on various public platforms, sharing their views on the club's current predicament and debating the deeper issues facing the once-dominant giants of South African football.

Many took to social media, that modern arena where football opinions spread quickly and rarely quietly. What emerged was a lively and at times heated debate about what exactly has gone wrong at Naturena.

Figures from different generations of the club began dissecting the situation from multiple angles. Some pointed to recruitment and squad planning as the root of the problem, arguing that the balance and quality of the team has drifted away from what a club of Chiefs' stature requires. Others highlighted instability within the technical structures, suggesting that frequent





changes in leadership have prevented the team from developing a clear footballing identity.

Another recurring theme was the sense that Chiefs may have lost touch with the philosophy that once defined the Amakhosi brand, a style of football that was not only successful, but also expressive and entertaining. For many former insiders, the issue is not just about results, but about whether the club still recognises what it is meant to represent.

“When did Chiefs, a strong football family, begin drifting away from its own legacy?” asks Muhsin Ertugral.

It’s been 17 years since his involvement at the Amakhosi, where the Turkish coach famously had two spells in charge, and won seven trophies. And while he’s since coached several clubs and spent a few years as the Turkish national team’s Technical Advisor, it is his time with Chiefs that he is most remembered for, and Chiefs are very close to the 66-year-old’s heart.

“Some figures in a club’s history are more than just former coaches or players. I think we all represented eras! They all represent identity, to be removed it shows a mentality. Where are the Doctors, Ace Khuses, Farouk Khans, Madida, Thabo Mooki and so on....

“For me, it is a question of belonging and respect, which you actually can learn from Bayern Munich and other top teams in the world.

“Kaizer Chiefs has always been more than results. It has been a standard. A symbol. A cultural institution in South African football. The walls are not just built only with trophies, but with character, conviction and memory. Just look back to the beginning years and decades.

I don’t think that any institutional memory will disappear because it is uncomfortable.

“The greatness of a club is visible not only in their victories, but for me, how it honours those who shaped it!

“I always think clubs grow stronger when they embrace their history, not just selectively honour it.

**“NOT ALL OF CHIEFS’ SUPPORTERS ARE ASKING FOR MIRACLES OVERNIGHT. SOME ARE ASKING FOR CLARITY, DIRECTION, AUTHENTICITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY.”**

“Mistakes will always happen. Human decisions, especially when it’s an ego-driven business, are never perfect.

“True leadership is always measured by accountability and obviously to correct the course with humility and even more with clarity.

“Let us remember that true value at Kaizer Chiefs is the DNA of this club; it carries loyalty and memory.

“This is not about an individual. It is about principle!

“It is not about a former coach or former players. It is about the identity that has built this badge.

“We all grew through our values in the past who served this club. And Chiefs will only move forward by protecting their values. With respect.”

As the debate spreads, public platforms increasingly become spaces for reflection, criticism and, in some cases, nostalgia. Some former figures spoke with visible frustration, others with measured concern, but the underlying message was similar: a club of Chiefs’ stature should not be searching so persistently for stability and direction.

Whether those voices represent constructive guidance or simply add to the growing noise around the club is another debate altogether. But what is clear is that when former Chiefs figures begin openly discussing the problems in public, it reflects





just how deeply the current situation is being felt across the wider Amakhosi family.

Perhaps that is because many are beginning to suspect that the recent moments of success were not signs that the storm had passed, but merely brief silver linings in a sky that is still very much overcast.

There is a growing fear that the tide has not yet turned, that the club may still be navigating the rough waters of a deeper rebuilding process rather than emerging from it.

Part of the emotional reaction may also stem from the strange contradiction of last season. On the one hand, Chiefs finally broke their long trophy drought by lifting the Nedbank Cup, a moment that meant everything to supporters who had waited more than a decade for silverware. On the other hand, the broader campaign was among the club's poorest in the modern era. The trophy was a moment of joy, but it also had the unintended effect of masking deeper issues that had not yet been fully addressed.

In football, silverware has a way of temporarily soothing wounds. It creates the illusion that progress has been made, even when the underlying structures remain fragile.

True rebuilding, however, is rarely quick or glamorous. It requires patience, clarity and alignment throughout an entire football institution. Players must understand their roles, coaches must deliver a clear identity on the pitch, management must provide stability off it, and the club must commit to a long-term vision. When even one of those pieces is out of place, the entire structure struggles to stand.

That raises the obvious question: are the current co-coaches a solution?

Realistically, probably not. The same could be said of Nabi before them, as recent events have shown. What Chiefs arguably needed was someone who could arrive with absolute clarity, a coach who already understood the environment, who knew exactly what kind of project he wanted to build, and who could begin laying foundations immediately rather than spending months adapting to a new football culture.

Instead, the club has found itself in a transitional cycle, a loop, moving from one temporary arrangement to another.

This is not necessarily a reflection on Kaze and Ben Youssef as coaches. By most accounts, they are capable professionals who understand the technical aspects of the game. But context matters in football, and context often shapes opportunity. Their presence at Naturena is tied directly to Nabi's appointment, and it is difficult to imagine either of them having been linked with Chiefs had that original decision never been made.

In many ways, they now find themselves trying to steer a ship they were never originally hired to captain. And at a club the size of Kaizer Chiefs, that is rarely an easy place to be.



**ERTUGRAL: "KAIZER CHIEFS HAS ALWAYS BEEN MORE THAN RESULTS. IT HAS BEEN A STANDARD. A SYMBOL. A CULTURAL INSTITUTION IN SOUTH AFRICAN FOOTBALL. THE WALLS ARE NOT JUST BUILT ONLY WITH TROPHIES, BUT WITH CHARACTER, CONVICTION AND MEMORY."**

And let's be clear. There have been improvements compared to the last two seasons. But again, context matters. Those campaigns were historically poor by the standards of Kaizer Chiefs, so progress from that low base was always expected. Improvement, in this case, should not be confused with transformation.

The reality is that Chiefs are still some distance away from genuinely competing with the league's two dominant forces, Mamelodi Sundowns and Orlando Pirates. At this stage of their journey, it might actually be more realistic for Amakhosi to measure themselves against clubs such as Sekhukhune United and Stellenbosch, sides that, through careful planning and steady progress, have quietly established themselves as competitive forces over the past few seasons.

For a club of Chiefs' stature, that may sound uncomfortable, but rebuilding is rarely flattering in its early phases.





Perhaps more importantly than league positions or statistical comparisons, what many supporters want to see again is a team that simply looks like it belongs to the badge. Chiefs were once more than just a successful club; they were a dream destination. Generations of players grew up imagining themselves in the famous gold-and-black jersey, playing expressive football, entertaining packed stadiums, and carrying the weight of one of South Africa's most powerful football identities.

Somewhere along the way, that feeling has faded.

Part of the difficulty lies in the erosion of the club's historical continuity. For decades, the Chiefs' culture was reinforced by legacy and the presence of legends and former players who remained closely involved with the club in various roles, passing down traditions and expectations to the next generation. Over time, many of those figures have naturally stepped away. Some have retired, others have moved on, and the living link between past and present has gradually weakened.

There are still former players involved in the structure today, but they are not necessarily the figures that immediately come to mind when supporters think about the classic Amakhosi identity. The result is a club that sometimes feels slightly disconnected from its own mythology.

Of course, football evolves. It may not be possible, or even desirable, to recreate the Chiefs of old. The famous traditional style that defined the club in earlier decades belonged to a different era, shaped by different players and a different game. But that does not mean a new, exciting version of Chiefs cannot emerge.

What matters is that it emerges with purpose.

A modern identity, one that entertains, competes, and inspires again, will not appear by accident. It requires careful thought about who will lead that transformation and how the club intends to rebuild its football philosophy. Vision must come before slogans.

Just as importantly, there must be honesty with the supporters. If the club, its coaches, or management begin speaking like title challengers, then those words must be backed up by performances, decisions, and results. Ambition without accountability quickly rings hollow in football.

**“FOOTBALL HAS A RUTHLESS WAY OF CORRECTING NARRATIVES.”**

Not all of Chiefs' supporters are asking for miracles overnight. Some are asking for clarity, direction, authenticity and accountability. They want to believe that the club knows exactly where it is going and how it plans to get there.

Many years ago, Bobby Motaung described Kaizer Chiefs as a “family business.” In many ways, he was right. The club has always been built on something deeper than just results and league tables. From the days when it first captured the imagination of supporters across the country, Chiefs has carried the feeling of a community, a football institution bound together by shared history, identity and pride.

But family, of course, is not only about bloodlines or those who sit in the boardroom. A true football family stretches far wider than that. It includes the supporters who have filled stadiums for generations, the former players who once carried the badge onto the pitch, and the coaches who helped shape the club's story through different eras. All of them are part of the wider Amakhosi household.

And perhaps part of the frustration surrounding the club today comes from the sense that some members of that extended family feel increasingly distant from the centre of things. Former figures who once lived and breathed the culture of Chiefs sometimes appear to be watching from the outside now.

That feeling of distance can create unease. Because when a club prides itself on being a family, those on the outside want to feel that their voice, their experience, and their connection still matter.

Maybe that is what much of the current noise around Chiefs really reflects.

For a club like Kaizer Chiefs, rediscovering that sense of togetherness might prove just as important as any tactical adjustment or transfer signing. Because when the family pulls in the same direction again, the rest often begins to fall into place.





# 'I'M NOT GOING TO SPEAK BAD ABOUT ANYONE'

*In domestic football the world over, the biggest prize any player dreams of is the league championship. That's the ultimate. Thousands and thousands of players get to play the game. Some, actually many, go throughout their careers without winning it. Those who win it once are lucky. If you win it more than once or even twice, you are a legend. But now some players just win it and win it. And one of those players who knows what it is like to win the championship is DAINÉ KLATE. He does not have one title. Not two either. He has won three with one club. But that was not the end because he went and added two more at another. He won a single at a different club for good measure. That's an incredible six league titles. Arguably one of the most exciting players this country has ever seen, Kláte has long hung up those championship-winning boots. In a country where the term legend gets used very loosely, I think – just based on the above – this man is a legend of South African football.*

**Matshelane Mamabolo:** Daine Kláte, lovely to see you, my boy, the legend.

**Daine Kláte:** Mr Mamabolo, I think you're a legend in your own right as well in your field. I remember meeting you while I was a teenager, starting out back in the day. And I see you are still going strong, looking so good. It is so good to see you too.

**MM:** You're kind, Daine, thanks. Look, your achievements as a player are common knowledge to most, but you are Daine Kláte, the coach now. Well, currently without a club because the other day you got fired. It is South African football, isn't it? Coaches come and go. But how was it to start a project from scratch? I met Gavin Hunt when he started at Durban City, and he was very excited, saying you and him are going to start a DDC team. But before you could even go anywhere, you were told goodbye. What happened?

**DK:** I think it's the nature of where the game is at the moment. The spaces in the clubs are very fickle. The corridors are where the big problem is. So yeah, the off-the-field matters of clubs at the moment is probably the biggest thing. And that builds over to the field of play. And the scapegoat will always be the coach. That's just the nature of the game.

**MM:** How was the experience at Durban City, though? And what went wrong, really?

**DK:** For starters, let me say I think it's a club with great potential. It's got a rich history that I got to learn about. When I was walking in the street wearing club clothing, random people would come to me and ask about Durban City and speak good about Durban City, you know. So it's a good brand. If you look at the club, the sponsors coming on board, you see that the Durban business people are excited to have the team back. What happened was out of our control as coaches. Coach Hunt obviously has his way of doing



**"THE SPACES IN THE CLUBS ARE VERY FICKLE. THE CORRIDORS ARE WHERE THE BIG PROBLEM IS. SO YEAH, THE OFF-THE-FIELD MATTERS OF CLUBS AT THE MOMENT IS PROBABLY THE BIGGEST THING."**

things. And once the clashes came with how to do things, you knew that was it. Gavin is a coach who comes from success. I was, of course, happy to be Gavin's guy. You know, once Gavin got sacked it was inevitable that I was going to follow. I sided with him because I agreed with a lot of the morals and the values that I grew up with in the game. And there were a lot of disagreements on certain things, such as the time of training and all those types of things. But I mean, those are things – that is part and parcel of the game. That's exactly what's happening now. But I absolutely enjoyed every moment at Durban City. The football side of things, the training and the camaraderie amongst the team and travelling with the team and the matches, that is what I looked forward to the most. But there are things out of my control that are happening in corridors and discussions that happen in corridors when you're not in the room. And those are probably the worst things that are in football at the moment.

**MM:** Does that turn you off?

**DK:** I wouldn't say so, hey. You've got to accept such. That is how the game is, wrong as it may be.

**MM:** You started at Chippa United, where you didn't last long, and the same happened at Durban City. Is coaching



### something you are going to pursue?

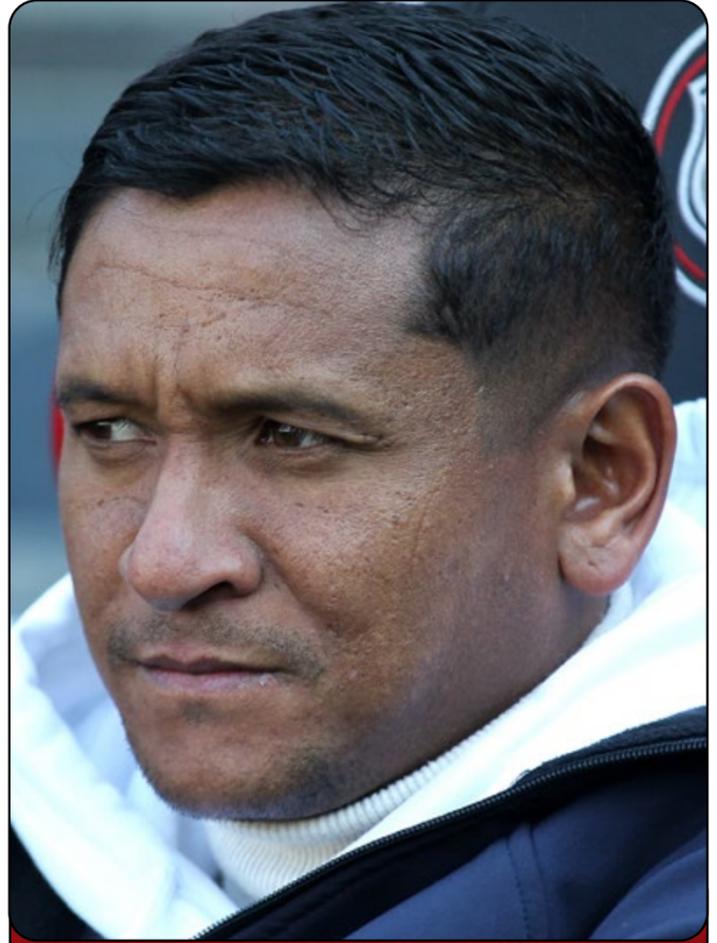
**DK:** Yeah, definitely. I think coaching is definitely my thing. Of course, my ultimate goal – given these experiences at different clubs – is to have my own football club, which I've actually started with a couple of friends. We call it eBhayi FC, which is in PE. So, it's a home thing, you know. And that's a long-term project. Luckily, we got some land now from the municipality, so we can start developing that. It's going to take a lot of time and patience, but ultimately that's what I want to do. I want to run the club because there's no use complaining about how clubs are run. And you're getting fired as a coach, left, right and centre. Maybe one day I will be able to make decisions on coaches because I'll be coming from a place of understanding. So that's the aim for me.

**MM:** But the coaching does not stop, surely? I mean, I know you have some badges, and you're working on adding more. How is that going, and what's the goal for you? How do you plan to use the badges?

**DK:** Yeah, look, obviously, I went the UEFA route. I visited Benni McCarthy when he was busy with his UEFA licences. I had a look at what he was doing, and I was very interested in it, you know. He connected me with the relevant people in Northern Ireland. And I got to do my badge there for two weeks in 2019. Unfortunately, I couldn't go back for part two of the A licence because of COVID. So I did it online. So I'm busy with part two of the A licence because it's in parts, and they give you three years for every part. And yeah, hopefully I'll get my A licence in due course. Upon receiving that A licence, you have to keep it for one year before you can apply for your UEFA Pro licence. So that's the ultimate goal is to get your UEFA Pro licence. And of course, I'm trying to enrol to study sports science at the moment. Probably something I could have done while playing. So, I would advise any player that they do it while still active. I'm thinking now, with all the travelling into Africa that I did, I could have used that time to study. Ja, maybe it would have taken me 10 years to complete, but I'd have it at the end of my career. But having said that, I think at my age, 40 years old, I can still do it. And it's always good to not only have a football background, but also sports science and psychology has become quite an interesting topic in football, a much-needed topic as well. So yeah, ultimately that's the direction that I'm trying to go into.

**MM:** If Gavin, who is now at Stellies, were to call, would you go?

**DK:** Of course I would. You know, when the call came for Durban City, I left immediately. I didn't even wait for tomorrow; I left immediately. It was an exciting opportunity for me. I learnt a lot from Coach Gavin. I saw the coach that I worked with, coaching the Durban City players, creating an environment, creating an atmosphere that brought the results. So, everything that happened wasn't football-related; it was off-the-field politics, let's call it that. But on the field, you know, I loved every minute of it. When I go on into those four lines, everything disappears.



**"I WENT THE UEFA ROUTE. I VISITED BENNI MCCARTHY WHEN HE WAS BUSY WITH HIS UEFA LICENCES. I HAD A LOOK AT WHAT HE WAS DOING, AND I WAS VERY INTERESTED IN IT."**

So, of course, if the call comes, if he needs me, I will gladly be an assistant coach. I think there's probably a perception that I don't want to be an assistant coach. I had a taste of being a head coach in the PSL at a very, very young age, upon retiring at Chippa United. Of course, one of the highlights of that was beating [Orlando] Pirates. I was approached by Chippa maybe three or four times when Norman Mapesa came in. They wanted me to join the first team. I was coaching in the Diski, then. I was busy with a good Diski project, and I felt that I needed to be in that space. I needed to coach there. Coach Gavin knows I love the Diski setup, and when I came in at Durban City, he was obviously there. I was comfortable with everything and everybody. The thing that Gavin told me, as the months went by in Durban, was that the worst mistake he made was probably not making me his assistant coach. And that obviously sat very, very well with me, like, because we spoke every day. We were together every day. I was his second assistant coach. I was at every session for the first team, you know. I understand his way of doing things. Not necessarily that I'm the same type of coach as Gavin, but I understand how he wants to do things, because I've won the league title four times with him. So, I think we have a formula to success, you know, and that is not in relation to football and being modern. I think success has got certain fundamentals that do not change. And when people want to change the fundamentals of success, then I don't think success is possible.

**MM:** Huntie has said some nice things about you as a coach and believes you will rise up and get something soon.

**DK:** He's my father. I think the best part of the Durban City job was the fact that I would see him and work with him. It was





great to spend time with him and Rowen Fernandez because they just made it special. Whatever else was happening besides the football, we could laugh about anything at any given time. We know what happened behind the scenes there. Speaking about it, I don't want to come across as bitter, because that's one thing he also taught me, you know, not to speak out, not to go to LinkedIn and all those types of things. There are certain people who will go and speak badly about other people. I'm not going to speak bad about anyone. The one thing I will commend Mr Kadodia and his son, the General Manager, are the way they treated me in the last week of being there. They called me to a meeting on Tuesday and spoke to me. They did a little bit of a review of how I feel, what I think can change, what challenges I'm faced with, and I wrote reports on all the players, as well as my recommendations of all the players. And then two days later, the General Manager met with me and made a decision that I'm not going to continue. But the way they did it was really, really nice, and I felt better than when I left Chippa. You see, at Chippa, I was just told, 'don't come to training tomorrow morning', and that was it – no further communication. So, I can be thankful for how my time at Durban City ended because the Chippa experience left a bitter taste in the mouth and it affected me mentally. It's not a good feeling, not at all, when you lose a coaching job, any coach will tell you. But it was good that the likes of Gavin and Coach Pitso [Mosimane] call and speak good things about you. You know what Benni [McCarthy] said when I left Chippa and what Coach Pitso said when I left Chippa. I appreciated that, you know. That people can see and know that certain things are out of your control.

**MM: So the experience between Chippa and Durban City was completely different...**

**DK:** The way I left Durban City was very memorable. I think I left on a good note. I think it was not because of my coaching, it was because of other factors. I was told that as well. If you look at the message from Durban City when I left, the media statement said it had nothing to do with my professionalism [or lack of it]. And it was not because of my work ethic. It was just that the timing probably was the worst thing, and that's what I was told. You know, maybe I came to the right club at the wrong time. That kind of gives you hope that, 'listen, you are not a bad coach'. They appreciate how you've built this team from scratch, the Diski team. And I always say when you go into any environment, you must leave it in a better space, and I'd like to think that Coach Hunt left them [Durban City] in a good space from where they were at the beginning of the season. And the Diski setup, having a team, having a way of doing things, yeah, that's something positive to look back on. Durban City has great potential. But like Coach Gavin said, there are certain things that shouldn't come out, you know. Some things should stay behind closed doors and should be accepted for what it is. So I have just moved on and will carry on until I find the environment that's going to suit me.

**MM: You said to me, you'd love to form a club. You're forming a club. Eventually,**



**“THE THING THAT GAVIN TOLD ME, AS THE MONTHS WENT BY IN DURBAN, WAS THAT THE WORST MISTAKE HE MADE WAS PROBABLY NOT MAKING ME HIS ASSISTANT COACH. AND THAT OBVIOUSLY SAT VERY, VERY WELL WITH ME.”**

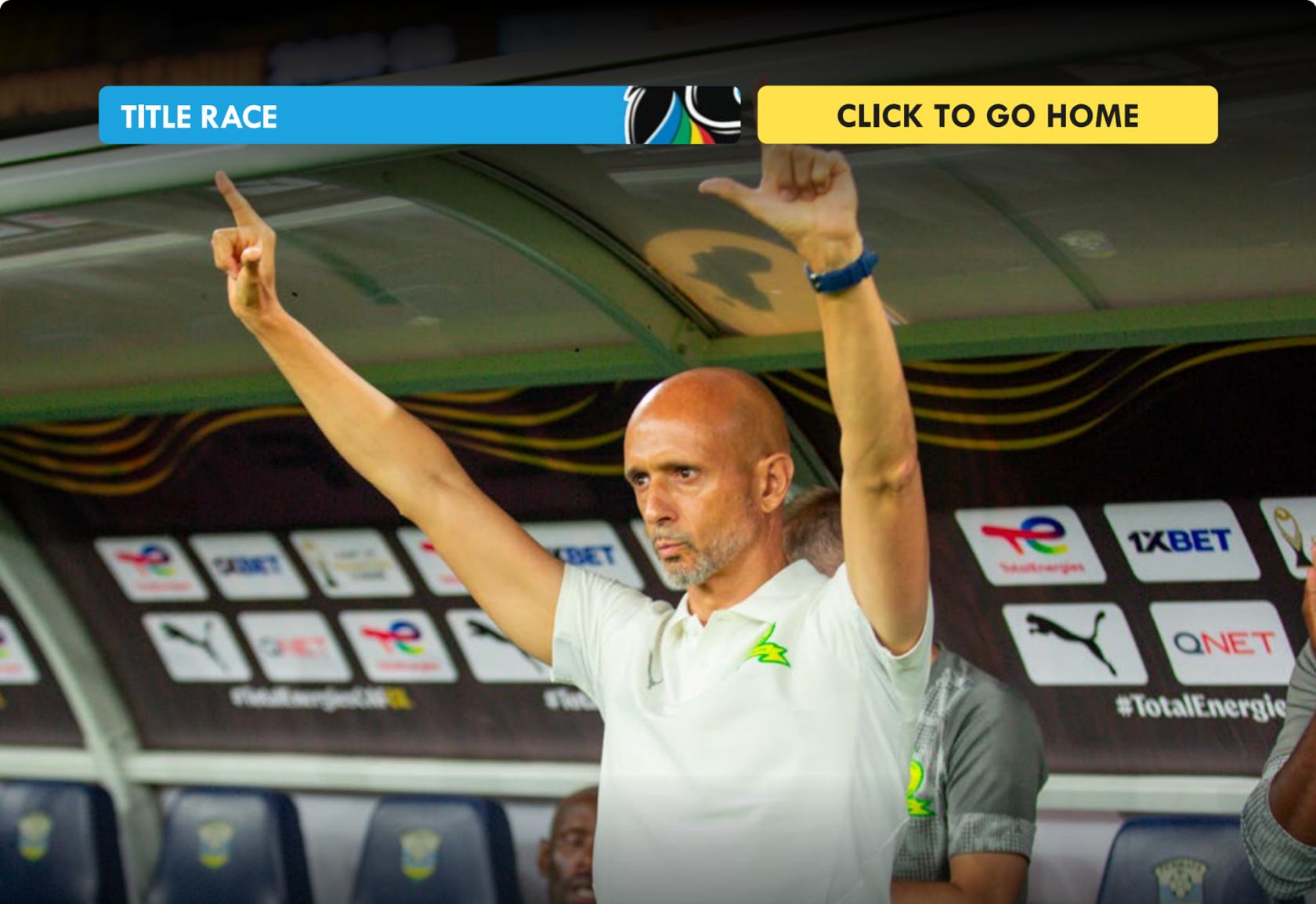
**that's where you want to go. But are you open to not working with Gavin? If another club called, would you go?**

**DK:** Of course. I'm very open to it. I'm still in the infant stage of my coaching career at the moment. So, I would develop into a toddler and grow into the game and someday get to where Coach Pitso Mosimane and Gavin Hunt got. I got to work with both coaches throughout my career, and I learnt a lot from them. At the beginning of my career, I worked with Coach [Kwanele] Kopo. We go back to the School of Excellence, where I had the late coach Mandla Mazibuko, who had a massive effect on the type of coach that I am now. There was also Coach Sam Mbatha. Those are the coaches that brought me through development. And now it's my turn to teach the kids in development on how it works. So I think, yes, definitely, I would love to be in an environment where I'm able to help. In any environment that I go into, I want to help. I want to be successful because I'm a born winner. Let's say it like it is. I hate losing. I'm gracious in defeat, but you have to be humble in victory sometimes. But for the most part, I can teach people how to win because I've done it myself.

**MM: Daine, thank you so much and here's to wishing that the coaching doors open up for you because you clearly have a lot to give to the local game.**

**DK:** Thank you, Mr Mamabolo.





# TWO ROADS TO THE BETWAY PREMIERSHIP TITLE

***With a double-figure gap separating the front-runners, Orlando Pirates and Mamelodi Sundowns, from the chasing pack, and with just nine matches remaining in the Betway Premiership, the title race has narrowed to what is, in effect, a two-horse contest.***

Pirates are attempting to halt Sundowns' era of dominance, but the challenge is a formidable one.

The Brazilians are chasing a remarkable ninth consecutive league crown, a level of sustained success rarely seen in South African football. The two rivals have already faced each other twice this season, meaning there will be no final head-to-head showdown to settle the matter. Their first meeting ended in a 1–1 draw in Tshwane in November, before Sundowns edged the return fixture 2–1 at Orlando Stadium last month.

With no direct duel left on the calendar, the battle may instead be decided by who blinks first in the closing stretch. Every slip, every unexpected draw, every dropped point will carry enormous weight in the final weeks of the campaign.

And while the rest of the league may be out of the title equation, several clubs could still influence where the trophy ultimately lands. Both contenders must still navigate tricky fixtures against sides pushing for top-eight finishes, including Kaizer Chiefs, Stellenbosch FC, Durban City, Richards Bay and TS Galaxy. Those teams may not be chasing the title, but they have plenty to play for themselves. And that can make them dangerous opponents.

On paper, Sundowns might appear to hold the advantage. Five of their final nine league matches will be played at home, compared to four for Pirates. Though home advantage may not be a factor, with both these teams having the best records away from home this

season, Pirates winning seven, and Sundowns six.

Yet Sundowns' schedule carries an added complication: continental commitments. The Tshwane giants are currently involved in a CAF Champions League quarter-final against Stade Malien, which will require travel to Mali and has added two extra fixtures to an already demanding month.

Should they progress to the semi-finals, two more continental clashes will follow in April, potentially forcing further reshuffling of their domestic fixtures (and two more in May if they make the final). Sundowns possess the deepest squad in the league, but the physical toll of travel and high-stakes continental football can affect even the strongest sides. Head coach Miguel Cardoso will instead hope the opposite happens, and that momentum from strong Champions League performances fuels their league push as well.

Pirates, meanwhile, have already shown their trophy credentials this season. Under Abdeslam Ouaddou, they have lifted both the MTN8 and the Carling Knockout. If the Buccaneers were somehow to add the league title as well, it would mark an extraordinary debut campaign for Ouaddou at the helm.

Another intriguing element of the run-in is scheduling. Pirates may have opportunities to play some of their matches before Sundowns, allowing them to temporarily apply pressure at the top of the table. If Sundowns progress further in the Champions League, this scenario could become more pronounced, with the defending champions occasionally forced to play catch-up in the standings.

With the finish line approaching, the equation is simple but unforgiving: nine games, twenty-seven points still available, and almost no margin for



error. One slip could tilt the balance, and in a race this tight, every weekend could change the story.

\* Orlando Pirates are on 48 points after 21 games, with Mamelodi Sundowns on 47 points after 20 games, and set to play Marumo Gallants on the 17th of March, prior to publishing.

### The Pirates Road

#### 22/03/2026 - TS Galaxy v Pirates

In the reverse fixture, Pirates prevailed with a comfortable 2–0 win back in September, but the trip to Mbombela will be anything but routine. Galaxy arrive buoyed by their run to the Nedbank Cup semi-finals and have shown a stubborn, industrious streak throughout the campaign. They may not always sparkle, but they rarely make life easy for opponents. In the 12 previous encounters between the clubs, Pirates have won six and Galaxy three, a record that suggests the Buccaneers hold the edge, but also that this fixture can bite if approached casually.

#### 07/04/2026 - Pirates v Arrows

History strongly favours the Buccaneers here. Pirates were convincing 3–1 winners in the reverse fixture in November and have traditionally enjoyed facing the Durban side at home. Arrows, now guided by Manqoba Mngqithi, have shown flashes of promise this season but have struggled badly on the road, currently owning one of the league's weakest away records. With the league restarting after the international break, this is exactly the sort of match Pirates will want to win convincingly to keep their momentum intact.

#### 10/04/2026 - Richards Bay v Pirates

A quick return to KwaZulu-Natal follows. Pirates beat Richards Bay 2–0 just last

week, but the Natal Rich Boys have been competitive in recent months and rarely go quietly on home soil. For Abdeslam Ouaddou's men, it's the sort of gritty away fixture that often defines a title run, uncomfortable, tense, but ultimately one where champions must still find a way to collect three points.

#### 18/04/2026 - Pirates v AmaZulu

This match completes a sequence of three opponents from KwaZulu-Natal. Pirates will take confidence from their convincing away victory over Usuthu earlier this year and will expect to control the game at home. AmaZulu, however, are capable of springing surprises, particularly if given space to counter. With the Soweto Derby looming the following week, the Buccaneers will also want a strong performance to carry belief and rhythm into their biggest match of the season.

#### 25/04/2026 - Pirates v Kaizer Chiefs

Even in seasons where the title race is lopsided, the Soweto Derby rarely loses its power. This time, though, the stakes may be even greater. Chiefs may not be in the championship picture, but they could play a decisive role in determining whether their rivals lift the trophy. Pirates dismantled Amakhosi 3–0 earlier in the year, yet derby matches have a way of rewriting narratives. One moment of brilliance, one mistake, one red card and the script can change entirely. Still, a victory here could be the emotional surge that propels Pirates toward the finish line.

#### 05/05/2026 - Stellenbosch v Pirates

After the intensity of the derby, Pirates face another serious examination away in the Cape Winelands. Under Gavin Hunt, Stellenbosch have rediscovered their competitive edge and rarely give away points cheaply. Pirates have





already beaten them twice this season — a narrow 1–0 league victory and a commanding 3–0 win in the MTN8 final — but this meeting may prove far tighter.

#### 09/05/2026 - Magesi v Pirates

By this stage of the season, every team has something to fight for. Magesi are likely to be battling near the bottom of the table, and survival desperation can make teams extremely dangerous opponents. Pirates have already beaten them twice this season, in the league and in the Carling Knockout, and will hope to complete a clean sweep.

#### 16/05/2026 - Pirates v Durban City

The penultimate match could be a tricky one. Durban City have exceeded expectations in their first season back in the top flight and have shown the confidence of a team with little to lose. Pirates won 2–0 in Durban earlier in the campaign, but it required patience and discipline. If the title race is still alive by this stage, the tension at Orlando Stadium could be palpable.

#### 23/05/2026 - ORBIT College v Pirates

On paper, Pirates will see this as the ideal way to close the campaign. Orbit College, newcomers to the league, could well be fighting for survival. Yet Pirates know better than to assume anything. Their narrow 1–0 win in the reverse fixture showed just how stubborn the rookies can be. Even so, if the Buccaneers arrive here with the title within reach, they will expect to finish the job.

#### The Sundowns Road

\*17/03/2026 - Sundowns v Marumo Gallants

#### 07/04/2026 - Durban City v Sundowns

Fresh after the international break, Sundowns travel to Durban knowing the margin for error is tiny. With games in hand likely to pile up due to continental commitments, the champions may occasionally find themselves chasing Pirates in the standings, and they will be a game behind when this fixture is played. While on paper Sundowns will be favourites for this tie and won 3-1 in Tshwane earlier in the season, City are still in the race for a third place finish, and have proved to be tough customers all season.

#### 11/04/2026 - Sundowns v Stellenbosch

The Brazilians were victorious in the reverse fixture in the Western Cape earlier in the season, but the situation has changed considerably since then. Stellenbosch now operates under Gavin Hunt's approach, and the visitors will not be intimidated in Tshwane. If Sundowns advance in the Champions League, this match could also be rescheduled, further complicating the calendar.

#### 15/04/2026 - Polokwane City v Sundowns

Sundowns will face Rise and Shine for the first time this season, and actually, the first time since November 2024, so this will be Miguel Cardoso's first meeting with them since taking charge. Polokwane have proved difficult opponents for many teams this campaign, particularly at home. With another meeting between the sides still to come later in the campaign, this could become an unexpectedly important subplot in the title race.



### 18/04/2026 - Sundowns v Chippa United

Historically, this is a fixture Sundowns have dominated. Yet the reverse match, which opened the current league season, ended in a surprise draw. Chippa have undergone several coaching changes since then, making them difficult to predict. As with several other Sundowns matches, this one may also be vulnerable to rescheduling depending on CAF commitments.

### 25/04/2026 - Richards Bay v Sundowns

Few teams have suffered more against Sundowns than Richards Bay. The Brazilians have won all 10 previous meetings between the sides, scoring freely in the process. Statistics, however, mean little in the pressure cooker of a title race, and Sundowns will still need to approach this encounter with focus.

### 06/05/2026 - Sundowns v Kaizer Chiefs

Just as with Pirates, Chiefs could become a decisive obstacle for Sundowns. Curiously, the Brazilians have not beaten Amakhosi in their last two meetings, losing in the Nedbank Cup last season and drawing 0–0 in Soweto earlier this campaign. If Sundowns want to keep their title charge on track, this is a match they will feel compelled to win.

### 09/05/2026 - Sundowns v Siwelele

The first meeting between the sides in December ended level, illustrating how stubborn Siwelele can be. They showed that again holding Pirates last weekend. With the club formerly known

as SuperSport United possibly battling for a top eight position, Sundowns may face a team desperate for points.

### 16/05/2026 - TS Galaxy v Sundowns

Perhaps the most dangerous away match left on Sundowns' schedule. Galaxy famously knocked them out of the Nedbank Cup earlier this year and will believe they can repeat the trick. While Sundowns won the league meeting 1–0 in November, coach Adnan Beganovic has built a side capable of frustrating the league's giants.

### 23/05/2026 - Sundowns v Polokwane City

The season concludes in Tshwane with Polokwane returning for the second meeting in just over a month. Should Sundowns reach the Champions League final, this match, along with the Galaxy fixture, may need to be rearranged, creating a web of possible permutations in the closing days of the campaign.

#### CAF Champions League fixtures:

**Quarter-finals second leg:** March 20, 2026, Stade Malien v Sundowns

**Semi-finals:** First legs are set for April 10–11, 2026, and second legs for April 17–18, 2026.

**Final:** Scheduled May 15, 2026 (first leg) and May 24, 2026 (second leg).

With so many moving parts, from continental travel to derby pressure and survival battles, the closing weeks promise drama. One slip, one surprise result, and the balance between Pirates and Sundowns could tilt dramatically.

# LENTJIES: WHY I'M NOW SELECTIVE OF CLUBS I JOIN

Following what one could describe as a not-so-pleasant experience during one of his previous coaching stints, Kurt Lentjies has opened up about his decision to be more selective when considering coaching opportunities. Lentjies, who has recently taken up the role of head coach of the AmaZulu DDC side, admitted that past experiences have influenced how he now approaches offers from clubs.

The 41-year-old tactician has also reunited with a familiar face, bringing in his former coach, Thabo Mngomeni, to serve as his assistant coach in the AmaZulu reserve team setup. Lentjies believes that working with someone he knows well and trusts will help create stability within the team and contribute positively to the development of young players at the club.

The move to AmaZulu came after he had been unattached since February last year. He and Mngomeni were surprisingly dismissed by ABC Motsepe League side FC Ravens despite the team sitting at the top of the table at the time. The decision raised eyebrows, given the club's strong position in the standings and the work the coaching duo had done up to that point.

Lentjies has stepped into the role following the departure of Mncedisi Sibiyi, who had been in charge of the Usuthu reserve side since October 2024. The club's management has entrusted Lentjies with the responsibility of guiding and developing the next generation of players within the AmaZulu system.

For Lentjies, relocating to KwaZulu-Natal is nothing new. During his playing career, he spent two spells with Maritzburg United, now known as Durban City, and therefore has some familiarity with the province. Reflecting on his return to the region, Lentjies expressed his happiness about being back in the city of Durban.

He said the city has been treating him well so far and thanked the club for the warm welcome he has received since his arrival. Lentjies also emphasised that he is fully aware of the responsibility that comes with the role and remains focused on the task at hand, which is to help develop young talent and contribute positively to the club's future.

"Durban is treating me well, but most importantly, the club is treating me well. I appreciate the welcome, and now I'm part of the family," Lentjies told iDiski Times' Sinethemba Sithole in an exclusive interview.

"That has helped me to settle, so I really appreciate what they have done for me. That's also what are my expectations, what I have to do, what I've been brought in to do."

Lentjies expressed his satisfaction with the team he currently has at his disposal, emphasising that he believes strongly in the players he is working with. He also noted that one of the most fulfilling parts of coaching for him is the opportunity



**"I'M VERY HAPPY WITH THE WELCOME, IT'S AN HONOUR AND PRIVILEGE TO BE PART OF AMAZULU - THE OLDEST CLUB IN SOUTH AFRICAN FOOTBALL."**

to help shape and develop the players, something he says brings him great pleasure.

"I'm feeling good, of course, with the team I have, like it's a work in progress, working with younger players, developing them. If you're not finding that pleasure out of developing the players, then what are you doing as a coach? So, I'm very happy with the welcome, it's an honour and privilege to be part of AmaZulu - the oldest club in South African football. I'm embracing it, enjoying it, and I'm sure players are enjoying having me as well."

Lentjies spent some time without a job after parting ways with Ravens. Reflecting on that chapter, he admitted that his time with the third-tier side ultimately "didn't work out" the way he had hoped for "some reasons", even though the team was sitting at the top of the table when he was sacked. That experience, he said, prompted him to rethink his approach to coaching opportunities, leading him to decide that he would no longer accept a "quick fix" role. Instead, he would only consider joining a well-structured club with a clear vision and long-term project, which is what he believes he found at AmaZulu.

"I was feeling good [while club-less], obviously, my last team was in the ABC Motsepe League, FC Ravens, which I saw as an exciting project. That didn't work out for some reason. After that, I told myself I'm going to be very selective who I'm gonna join as a coach. There must be a project at hand, not just a quick fix or

anything for them to get where they want to be.”

During the period when he was unattached, Lentjies revealed that he used the time productively by focusing on improving himself as a coach. He explained that he was working towards completing his CAF A Licence, an important step in advancing his coaching qualifications. The opportunity to join AmaZulu arrived at the right moment, as he had not only gained valuable time to reflect but had also up-skilled himself in various aspects of coaching.

“As much as I was at home, I was busy up-skilling myself, getting my CAF A Licence done and then studying. I told myself, AmaZulu is a very stable club, well-organised club, so it just made sense to me when they approached me. So, that’s why I said yes to the AmaZulu challenge.”

Lentjies explained that when he arrived at the club, the expectations surrounding his role as DDC coach were clearly outlined to him. He was told that his main responsibility would be to focus on developing young players rather than placing too much emphasis on winning the DDC trophy. According to Lentjies, the primary objective is to prepare the players for promotion to the first team when the time is right, ensuring that they are not only technically ready but also mentally strong enough to handle the demands of senior football. He added that he works closely with first-team head coach Arthur Zwane as they aim to build a strong link between the senior squad and the reserve side. Lentjies also mentioned that he regularly attends first-team training sessions, which allows him to observe how things are done at that level and learn valuable lessons from the environment.

“The role was put clear to me when I arrived that I must develop players, obviously to graduate from the DDC to the first team. That’s the priority order, it’s not results cause what’s the use of winning the DDC if we can’t promote the players to the first team. So, that’s my goal and target to develop players so that they can graduate at the right time to go and help in the first team and obviously. And coach Arthur [Zwane], he’s been supportive as well. We are aligning the DDC with the first team; that’s why you’re seeing me in the first team [training session]. So, it’s just to grasp and learn how they do things in the first team, and I can implement it to the DDC. It’s a work in progress and a good one; I’m comfortable doing it. Coach Arthur has been super supportive to me, so is the entire club.”

Having now been in the province for several weeks, Lentjies has praised the level of talent he has seen, noting that KwaZulu-Natal continues to produce some of the country’s most promising young players.

“KZN is blessed with talent, but you know I’ve been seven years in Port Elizabeth, but KZN, yooo, there’s a hub of talented players. But everywhere there’s talented players, but my idea is how to develop them mentally because of the mental aspect is not something we’re touching on, then we’re wasting our time. How many



**“ME AND THABO ARE LIKE...I CAN’T DO THIS WITHOUT HIM. WE WORK SO WELL TOGETHER, WE HAVE A GOOD UNDERSTANDING OF EACH OTHER AND YEAH.”**

talented players we’ve seen falling off over the years? So, I want to try do that. Take the boys to the next level, not just promote them so they can play in the PSL for a year or two, but to have longevity because they have to be under nutrition and all those things. It’s part and parcel of being a professional player. If you get the mental aspect correctly, the sky is the limit.”

Speaking about working alongside Mngomeni, Lentjies said the former Orlando Pirates star played a significant role in shaping his career earlier on. Because of that influence, he feels a sense of responsibility to give back and show his appreciation. Lentjies explained that this is why he intends to take Mngomeni with him wherever he goes in his coaching journey. He also believes that the young players at AmaZulu stand to benefit greatly from Mngomeni’s experience and knowledge of the game.

“Coach Thabo knows me since the age of 21, when I was playing for Ikapa Sporting in the First Division. He was the assistant coach there, and we just connected on every base. When we went to CAF B [License course] together, I was with him in the course. I made him a promise. I was like you have helped me so much in my career. Wherever I’m going, I’d like you to come and assist me.

“I’m living up to that promise. It’s all because of what he’s done in my career; he has always helped me. It just makes sense to me to have him with me, and we’re working with the younger guys together. So, if those young guys can grasp from his experience like I did over the years, they can achieve whatever they want to achieve in their career. Me and Thabo are like...I can’t do this without him. We work so well together, we have a good understanding of each other and yeah.”



## THE IDISKI TOP 10... ACTIVE SA COACHES

***This week, iDiski Times highlights the top 10 most successful South African coaches currently making their mark across the global game.***

From the dugouts of Africa to opportunities further afield, South African tacticians continue to fly the country's flag with distinction. This list recognises not only those who have

earned opportunities abroad or at the highest level, but have also translated those chances into tangible success on the pitch.

The order of our list is determined by overall performance, with the winning of major silverware serving as the primary benchmark. Consistency, impact at their respective clubs, and the level of competition they have faced have also been taken into consideration.

To qualify, a coach must have held a professional Head Coach position at a top-tier club within the last five years, ensuring the focus remains on those who are actively shaping the modern game.

(\*statistics as of March 2026)

### The Top 10:

**10. Benni McCarthy**  
**One major trophy**  
**48-years-old**

Kenya national team boss Benni McCarthy remains one of South Africa's most recognisable and highly regarded coaches, even if his cabinet of silverware as a head coach is still relatively modest. His place on this list comes courtesy of his MTN8 triumph with Cape Town City in 2018, a success that confirmed his credentials on the touchline after a glittering playing career. Interestingly, McCarthy did not win Coach of the Year in South Africa for that trophy, but rather for his remarkable spell with AmaZulu in the 2020/21 campaign. There, he guided Usuthu to a shock second-place finish in the league, earning widespread praise for transforming the Durban club into genuine contenders.

McCarthy's coaching journey has also taken him into the elite of European football. Before his surprise decision to take charge of Kenya's Harambee Stars — his third head coach role — he spent two seasons at Manchester United as a first-team coach under Erik ten Hag, gaining invaluable experience at one of the world's biggest clubs. With plenty of admirers and growing international experience, there is a strong sense that McCarthy's coaching story is only just beginning.



**9. Steve Barker**  
*One major trophy*  
*58-years-old*

Now at Simba SC in Tanzania following his surprise departure from Stellenbosch FC, Steve Barker has long been one of the most consistent and respected figures in South African coaching circles. His career has been defined by patience, stability and the ability to build competitive teams over the long term. Barker first made his name at the University of Pretoria, where he guided AmaTuks into the top flight and established them as a competitive PSL outfit. After a shorter spell at AmaZulu, he moved to the Western Cape, first as an assistant before taking charge of Stellenbosch, where he spent several years carefully shaping the club into one of the most organised and progressive sides in the country. Despite those achievements, silverware proved elusive for much of his career, until 2023, when Stellenbosch lifted the Carling Knockout, the first major trophy in the club's history. It was a landmark moment not only for the club but also for Barker, whose perseverance over decades in the dugout was finally rewarded.

**8. Clinton Larsen**  
*Two major trophies*  
*55-years-old*

Clinton Larsen's coaching career has taken him on a true journeyman's journey across the South African football landscape. Currently leading Venda Football Club in the Motsepe Foundation Championship, Larsen has built a reputation as a resilient coach capable of achieving success in difficult circumstances. His first major triumph came in 2012 when he guided Bloemfontein Celtic to Telkom Knockout glory, a memorable moment for a club with one of the most passionate fan bases in the country. More than a decade later, Larsen produced one of the biggest cup shocks in recent South African football when he led Magesi FC to Carling Knockout success in 2024. Between those milestones, Larsen's career has included spells in various divisions, including time in the ABC Motsepe League, and roles at no fewer than 11 clubs since he retired as a player nearly two decades ago. That long and winding road has forged a coach known for persistence and adaptability.

**7. Bradley Carnell**  
*Two major trophies*  
*49-years-old*

Bradley Carnell has also carved out one of the most unique coaching paths among South African tacticians, building his reputation thousands of kilometres away in the United States. After beginning his coaching journey in South Africa as an assistant at Free State Stars and Orlando Pirates, Carnell moved abroad to join the New York Red Bulls as part of their technical staff. His breakthrough came when he stepped in as interim head coach, impressing sufficiently to earn greater opportunities within the organisation. That ultimately led to him being

appointed the inaugural head coach of St Louis City SC, where he made history by guiding the expansion franchise to Western Conference success in their very first MLS season, a remarkable achievement. Following a difficult second campaign, Carnell moved on but quickly bounced back with Philadelphia Union. The 2025 season proved unforgettable, as he led the club to the MLS Supporters' Shield and earned widespread acclaim, including the MLS Coach of the Year award. His rise continues to enhance South Africa's coaching reputation on the global stage.

**6. Eric Tinkler**  
*Two major trophies*  
*55-years-old*

Eric Tinkler's coaching career has often felt like a story of near misses and unfinished business. Currently in charge at Sekhukhune United, Tinkler is widely respected for the football his teams often produce and his ability to compete with limited resources. While he has lifted two major trophies as a head coach, his career has been dotted with agonisingly close calls. As caretaker



coach of Orlando Pirates, he led the club to cup finals, narrowly missing out on silverware. Similar near-successes followed during spells with SuperSport United, Cape Town City and Maritzburg United. Those experiences have given Tinkler the reputation of a coach who consistently builds competitive teams capable of challenging the best. With Sekhukhune continuing to grow as a club, he will undoubtedly be eager to add further trophies to a résumé that arguably deserves a little more silverware than it currently holds.

**5. Morena Ramoreboli**  
*Three major trophies*  
*45-years-old*

Morena Ramoreboli's coaching journey has been anything but conventional, yet it has steadily built a reputation that stretches beyond South Africa's borders. While he has not yet lifted major silverware in his home country, he has enjoyed notable success elsewhere on the continent. His most memorable achievement came in 2021 when, as caretaker coach, he guided Bafana

Bafana to victory in the COSAFA Cup, making him the only coach on this list to have lifted international silverware. The triumph showcased his ability to organise a squad quickly and deliver results under pressure. Ramoreboli also enjoyed considerable success with Botswana giants Jwaneng Galaxy, leading them to domestic silverware and impressive performances in the CAF Champions League. Those achievements significantly raised his profile in Southern African football and ultimately led to his appointment as Botswana's national team coach in 2025. For a coach who began his journey with Maluti FET College, it has been a remarkable rise.

**4. Manqoba Mngqithi**  
*Five major trophies*  
*54-years-old*

Manqoba Mngqithi first captured national attention when he led Golden Arrows to a famous MTN8 triumph, a victory that marked him out as one of the brightest tactical minds in the country. However, his path since then has been anything but straightforward. After leaving Arrows, a series of challenging spells as a head coach followed before Pitso Mosimane brought him into the technical team at Mamelodi Sundowns. That move proved pivotal. Working alongside Mosimane and later alongside Rulani Mokwena, Mngqithi played a key role in one of the most dominant periods in South African club football. As co-coach with Mokwena, he helped guide Sundowns to four major trophies before Mokwena eventually assumed sole control of the team. Following Mokwena's departure, Mngqithi briefly took charge again before Miguel Cardoso arrived, prompting a return to Golden Arrows, the club where his coaching journey first truly flourished.

**3. Rulani Mokwena**  
*Eight major trophies*  
*39-years-old*

It is easy to forget that Rulani Mokwena is still only 39 years old, such has been his influence on South African football over the past decade. The son of football legend Julius Sono, Mokwena has long been regarded as one of the game's sharpest tactical thinkers. His rise began when Pitso Mosimane promoted him to the technical staff at Mamelodi Sundowns, a move that placed him at the heart of one of Africa's most successful clubs. Although he spent time gaining experience elsewhere, it was at Sundowns where Mokwena truly made his mark, first as co-coach alongside Manqoba Mngqithi and later as head coach. During that period, he oversaw a trophy-laden era and earned widespread admiration for his progressive football philosophy. After his dramatic exit from Sundowns, Mokwena continued his journey abroad, enjoying a productive spell with Wydad AC in Morocco before moving to MC Alger in Algeria. Just this past weekend, Mokwena left the Algerians, currently top of the table, reportedly on his way to join Al Ittihad in Libya. Given what he has achieved before turning 40, the next decade could be even more



remarkable.

## 2. Gavin Hunt

*Eight major trophies*  
*61-years-old*

Before the rise of Pitso Mosimane's trophy-laden era, Gavin Hunt was widely regarded as South Africa's most successful coach. His dominance began with SuperSport United, where he guided the club to an incredible three consecutive league titles between 2008 and 2010. Hunt later repeated the feat of winning the league with Bidvest Wits in 2016/17, a triumph that remains historically significant as the last time any club other than Mamelodi Sundowns lifted the Premiership trophy. In recent years, after Wits sold up, his career has included several shorter spells — at Kaizer Chiefs, Chippa United, SuperSport again and Durban City — before recently returning to the Western Cape for the first time in two decades to take charge of Stellenbosch. While some critics have questioned his more recent stints, Hunt's track record and longevity ensure he remains one of the most respected figures in the South African game.

## 1. Pitso Mosimane

*19 major trophies*  
*61-years-old*

Few would dispute Pitso Mosimane's status as the most successful coach in South African football history. Over the course of an extraordinary career, he has accumulated more silverware than any other coach from the country, including three CAF Champions League titles. Mosimane's achievements have not been confined to South Africa. His success with Mamelodi Sundowns opened doors across the continent and beyond, leading to high-profile roles at Al Ahly in Egypt, Al Ahli in Saudi Arabia, Al Wahda in the UAE and Esteghlal in Iran. Few South African coaches have enjoyed such a broad international footprint. Despite his glittering résumé, Mosimane has not been in charge of a club for over a year, instead focusing on his Pitso Mosimane Soccer Schools project. For many observers, that absence from the touchline feels unusual given his stature. The lingering question is whether he will return to club football or perhaps seek redemption with Bafana Bafana, a chapter in his career that ended before it truly had the chance to flourish.

### The Coaches' Honour Roll:

Seven other South African coaches have won major domestic silverware in the last two decades (since 2005/06):

- Dan Malesela (Nedbank Cup, TS Galaxy, 2018/19)
- Roger De Sa (Nedbank Cup, Wits, 2009/10; MTN8, Ajax Cape Town, 2015/16)
- Gordon Igesund (Absa Premiership, Sundowns, 2006/07; Telkom KO, SuperSport, 2014/15)
- Allan Freese (Telkom KO, Platinum Stars, 2013/14)
- Zeca Marques (MTN8, Moroka Swallows, 2012/13)
- Trott Moloto (Nedbank Cup 2007/08,

- Neil Tovey (Absa Premiership, Sundowns, 2005/06)

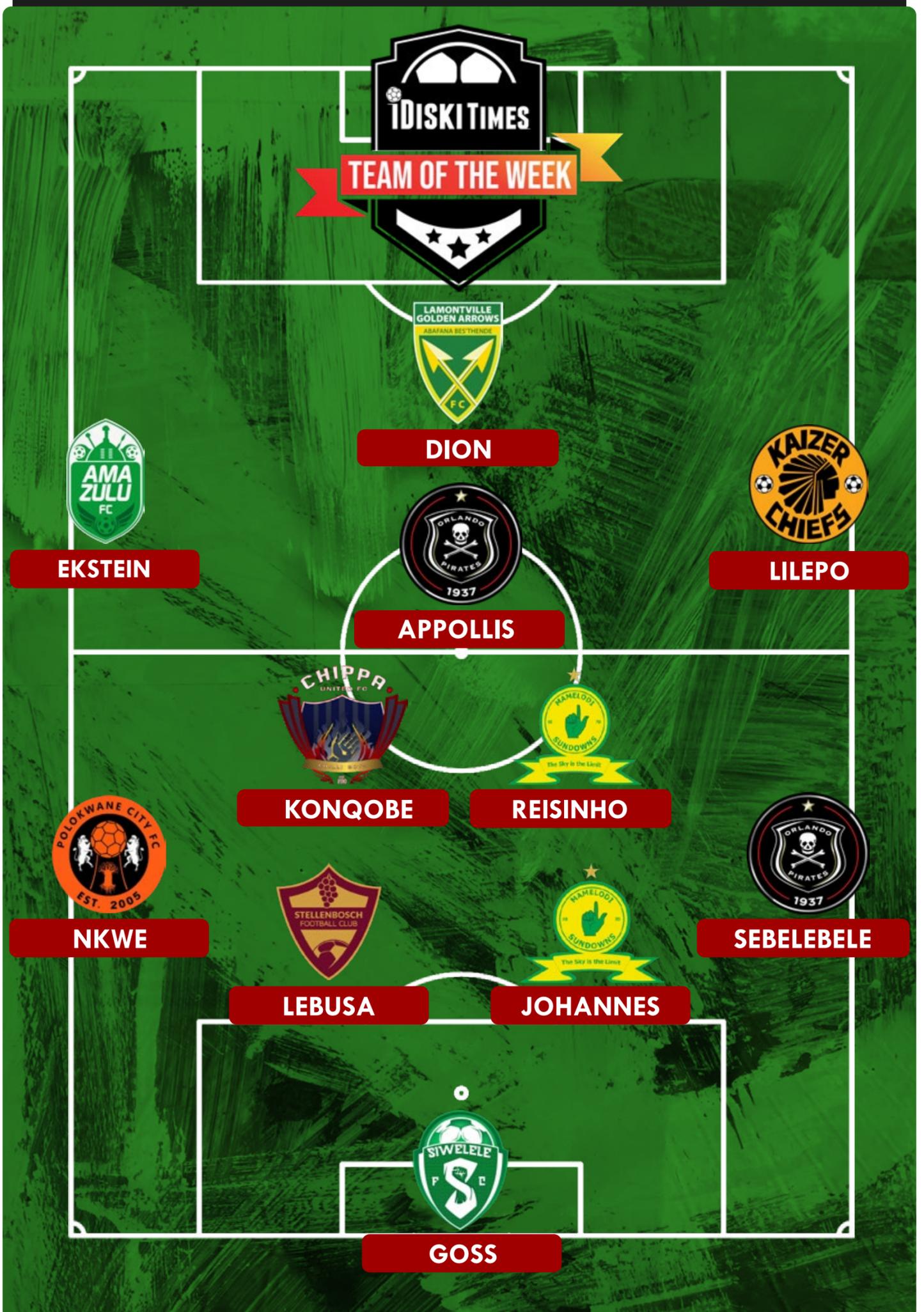
Among them, Igesund stands apart in the record books. Now out of the top flight for nearly a decade, he remains the only coach to win four league titles with four different clubs, guiding Mamelodi Sundowns (2006/07), Santos FC (2001/02), Orlando Pirates (2000/01) and Manning Rangers (1996/97) to glory.

Interestingly, Igesund's league triumph with Pirates remains the last time either Soweto giant lifted a major trophy under a South African coach. Since then, the next 33 trophies won by Orlando Pirates and Kaizer Chiefs have all come with foreign coaches in charge.

And while 10 current Betway Premiership clubs are presently led by South African coaches, only three feature on this list. Six are currently working abroad, while Mosimane stands alone as the only high-profile free agent. A surprising status for arguably the most decorated coach the country has ever produced.



**IDISKI'S PREMIERSHIP TEAM OF THE WEEK (10 - 15 MARCH 2026)**



**ACES OF THE WEEK:  
MAMELODI SUNDOWNS**

Our iDiski Times Aces of the Week have to be the Mamelodi Sundowns team after their comprehensive 3-0 win over Stade Malien in the first leg of the quarter-finals of the CAF Champions League on Friday. It was one of the best Sundowns performances of the year, and that's saying something considering Miguel Cardoso's team has been in good form. Khuliso Mudau gave the Brazilians a first-half lead before Nuno Santos set up both Brayan Leon and Iqraam Rayners for second-half goals to put Sundowns in the driving seat going into this week's second leg away.



## 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.

## Vryburg's Gift To The World

By Rob Delpont

***While Gift Links may not quite fit the mould preferred by Hugo Broos when it comes to his South Africa national football team selections, the Belgian coach's view places him firmly in the minority among those who have watched the 27-year-old closely over the years.***

To many who have followed his journey from the beginning, Links has long looked like a footballer cut from a different cloth, slight in stature perhaps, but rich in instinct, intelligence and courage.

Links is the first current player iDiski Times has featured in this series, and the timing is fitting. His absence from the national team has become a regular talking point among supporters, pundits and former players alike. Remarkably, the last time Links pulled on the Bafana jersey was almost five years ago, a gap that feels even longer when measured against the steady growth of his career abroad.

Yet this week, he quietly reached a milestone that few South Africans playing in Europe ever manage. When he stepped onto the field for Aarhus Gymnastikforening against Sønderjyske, Links made his 200th appearance for the Danish side, a landmark that speaks not only of longevity, but of trust, consistency and a deep bond with the club and its supporters.

"Yeah, of course, on Sunday, I made my 200th appearance for AGF," an excited Links said to me this week.

"And yeah, of course, it's great. Of course, when I moved to Denmark in 2019, it never crossed my mind that I would be at this point, whereby I play 200 games for one club.

"But, you know, it's a big, big privilege for me to reach 200 games with AGF. And it means a lot for me as well, because I'm really happy here. I like it, the fans and the club, they just made me feel at home. So I think that's why.

"So yeah, hopefully there'll be many more games to come for me here. And I can't wait to keep going, you know.

"And I'm happy as well, because I'm the first foreigner for the club to get to 200, so it's a big, big milestone for me personally.

"It's obviously a great achievement, just a kid from South Africa, Vryburg, I never thought that I would come to Europe and reach 200 games. So it's a big milestone."

Born in Vryburg before moving to Rustenburg at the age of six, Links emerged from the academy of the now-defunct Platinum Stars,

coming through with a generation of technically gifted youngsters.

From early on, he carried the tag that would follow him throughout his career: he was small. Coaches, scouts and even opponents often judged him by his frame before they judged his football. Yet inside that slight body lived the appetite and spirit of a giant.

Even as a youth player at Dikwena, Links showed a mindset that separated him from many of his peers. While most youngsters idolised the dazzling wingers and flashy playmakers lighting up South African football, Links was fascinated by a very different figure: Henrico Botes. The rugged Namibian international striker was the complete opposite of the player Links appeared destined to become, a physical, uncompromising target man who thrived on aerial battles and brute strength.

The young winger admired Botes so much that he insisted on wearing the same shirt number. He wanted to be like Botes, to lead the line and bully defenders in the same fashion. Nature, of course, had other plans. The diminutive youngster would never grow into that kind of striker. But the determination behind that dream revealed something important: Links was fearless.

"Not too many people believed that I'll become a professional player because I'm so small. But it's all about inside, what I am willing to do, which is I work hard every day, and I'm not scared to go into duels."

Despite doubts about his size, there were always those who recognised the potential. One of the first was Cavin Johnson, who promoted Links to the Platinum Stars' first team while he



was still a teenager — a clear vote of confidence in the young attacker's ability. Another believer emerged at national level when then-Bafana coach Stuart Baxter invited the youngster to train with the senior national side during a camp, offering him an early glimpse of the international stage.

Word of his talent was also spreading far beyond South Africa's borders. In a move that caught many by surprise, Links secured a transfer to Egyptian Premier League side Al-Assiouty Sport. At the same time, much of the spotlight in Egyptian football was falling on another South African youngster, Phakamani Mahlambi, who had joined African giants Al Ahly SC amid considerable hype.

While Mahlambi's move dominated headlines, Links quietly went about his business. Without the glare of intense scrutiny, he worked, learned and impressed when given opportunities. It was a reminder that his career path had never really been about noise or hype — it had always been about perseverance.

But Egyptian football was changing quickly. Al-Assiouty Sport was sold and rebranded as Pyramids FC, the ambitious project that would eventually rise to become CAF Champions League winners. With new ownership came new priorities, including a wave of high-profile foreign signings. In that new vision, Links no longer featured.

His next step brought him back home, where he joined Cape Town City F.C. under the guidance of Benni McCarthy.

"I remember when I got to Cape Town City, I was complaining the first three months to my agent, 'I'm not playing', I got angry. And Benni, he just said to me, 'Gifty my boy, don't rush, I will play you when the time is right. Trust me. I don't want to throw you under the bus. So just be patient'.

"And yeah, that's how it happened. He improved my game, big time. Coach Benni is someone who helped me a lot. Whether I play friendly games or I play official games, I need to take everything seriously. Because I remember the month before I signed in Denmark, during pre-season, we were playing against Chippa in a friendly again. And then we were 5-0 up. I scored two goals first half, and then I went one-on-one with the goalkeeper, and then I tried to chip the goalkeeper, and then Benni got so angry at me. And then he took me out straight. And then he said, 'Sit next to me'. And then I sat next to him. And then he says to me, 'Do you know why I took you out?' I was like, 'No'. And he was like, 'because when you get these kinds of opportunities, you need to score. I know it's a friendly game, but you never know who's on the stand watching the game. So this is a lesson for you to take everything seriously'. And then from that day, I was like yeah, that's true. Whenever you play, you never know who's watching, so you just got to try and give your all at all times."

It proved to be a turning point. In McCarthy's energetic, attacking side, Links began to flourish. His quick feet, clever movement and fearless approach made him one of City's most exciting players, and his performances soon forced their way into the national conversation.

Recognition followed. Links was a regular call-up for the national U23 team, and earned his first caps for Bafana Bafana, making his debut at the 2018 COSAFA Cup. For a player once dismissed because of his size, it was a powerful reminder that footballing intelligence and heart often matter more than physical dimensions.

And as his star began to rise in South Africa, more admirers were watching, this time from far beyond the continent.

Scouts in Scandinavia had been tracking his progress, and in September 2019,



Cape Town City sanctioned a move that would change the course of his career. Links completed a then-record transfer to Danish Superliga side Aarhus Gymnastikforening, embarking on the next chapter of a journey that had already taken him much further than many had predicted for the small boy from Vryburg.

He was gradually integrated into the AGF setup. In his first season, his opportunities were limited as he adapted to a new country, a new language and the demands of European football. But by the 2020/21 campaign, Links had established himself as a key member of the first team, his pace and direct running adding a new dimension to AGF's attack.

It was around this period that he was called up by Broos for FIFA World Cup qualifiers. Links featured in a goalless draw away to Zimbabwe, but it proved to be a difficult evening. Carrying an injury into the match, he had raised concerns beforehand but was ultimately cleared to play. The game quickly turned into one he would rather forget. The injury flared up, forcing him off at half-time, and questions were raised by some within the camp about his commitment. The reality, however, was that Links would spend almost two months sidelined afterwards. It was his last appearance for Bafana.

Once back on his feet in Denmark, though, his career truly began to take flight. Links found a home at AGF and embraced life in his adopted city of Aarhus. Over time, he even reinvented himself on the pitch, transitioning into a wing-back role where his pace, work rate and attacking instincts became even more valuable.

The supporters took him to heart. Off the field, he settled into Danish life, even meeting his partner there. Slowly, everything seemed to fall into place.

“The thing is, the environment, the place where you go into it, becomes easy when people welcome you and make you feel welcome.

“I think in Egypt, the same thing happened when I arrived there, the people welcomed me very nice. It was the same here in Denmark. The first day I arrived here, they welcomed me. Everyone here is just friendly and nice, so I think that helps a lot as well, especially coming from Africa to Europe.

“Obviously, different cultures and all that, and obviously, you might find that in some other countries, people are so close, so it's hard to break in. But then, when I got here at AGF, everyone just opened up, and they welcomed me very nicely, and I think that helped a lot.”

His flair, decisive goals and knack for big moments have often seen him compared to another South African favourite in Denmark, Sibusiso Zuma. Not necessarily because their playing styles mirror each other, but because both became South

Africans who captured the imagination of Danish supporters. Zuma remains a cult hero at FC Copenhagen, and Links has built a similar bond with the Aarhus faithful.

“It is crazy how Sibusiso Zuma is celebrated more in Europe than back at home.

“I remember he was here. This guy is a big, big, big legend. This guy, when he walks, just around the city, the whole city comes to a standstill. That's how big Zuma is. Each and every person will be saying ‘Zuma, Zuma, Zuma’. It's insane.

“I'm telling you now, if I go out and then people hear that I'm from South Africa, the first thing they will ask is, ‘Do you know Zuma?’ Even young kids know about Zuma. That's crazy.”

It is crazy. But we'll keep Zuma's story for another day...

In recent seasons, it has been no surprise to see Gift's name linked with bigger clubs across Europe.

Persistent whispers from France in particular have followed him from one transfer window to the next. Yet before any new adventure begins, there may still be one chapter left to write in Aarhus.

AGF last lifted the Danish championship in 1986 — nearly four decades ago.

Now, remarkably, they find themselves leading the Danish Superliga table, five points clear as the league enters the final nine matches in the Championship group.

If Links eventually moves on, he will already leave as one of the club's most beloved modern players. But if he were to help deliver that long-awaited title first, then the small boy, once doubted because of his size, would truly become the Gift that Aarhus waited forty years to receive.



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