



PIRATES ON HUNT TO EQUAL CHIEFS' MAJOR MTN8 RECORD



NTSEKI: TOP SA COACHES MOVING ABROAD GOOD FOR LOCAL FOOTBALL



MAEMA SET FOR ANOTHER LOAN



BROOS ERA ENDS: NEXT BAFANA COACH MUST TARGET SILVERWARE



SUNDOWNS APPOINT NEW HEAD OF SCOUTING



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# SHINE ON MASANDAWANA

26/27 MAMELODI SUNDOWNS HOME KIT

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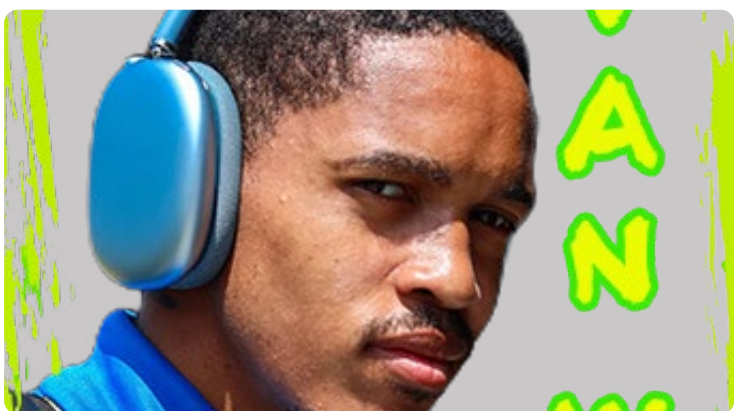
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## MAEMA CLOSING IN ON SIMBA RETURN

Mamelodi Sundowns playmaker Neo Maema looks set to return to Simba SC for the 2026/27 season. Maema spent last season on loan with a successful spell in Tanzania, initially being lured by then head coach Fadlu Davids. Steve Barker has since taken charge of the club where Maema continued to flourish but upon his return to Sundowns this off season speculation has been rife on his next move. Sources have confirmed Maema is keen on returning to the club under Barker as they look to end the dominance of Young Africans in the Tanzanian top-flight and its likely to be finalised in the coming days.



## WITBOOI REMAINS IN LIMBO DESPITE GAUTENG INTEREST

Cape Town City's reported R20-million price tag on teenage sensation Emile Witbooi remains the stumbling block on a potential move to Gauteng. Mamelodi Sundowns, Orlando Pirates and Kaizer Chiefs have all made contact with the club over the Motsepe Foundation Championship Player of the Season with the view of securing one of the brightest talents in the country. However, the club has remained firm on their price tag that was set for European suitors, which has left the Citizens in a strong position to secure him for another season as they look to win promotion back to the top-flight. Witbooi played a key role in their top-three finish last season as they missed out in the playoffs, and after the exit of Jaedin Rhodes to SV Ried in Austria, more responsibilities could lie on the shoulders of the Amajita star.



## LE ROUX EXIT LIKELY BEFORE WINDOW SHUTS

Bafana Bafana midfielder Luke Le Roux is likely to leave Portsmouth for a loan deal before the end of the transfer window. The 26-year-old is currently out of favour at the English Championship club under head coach John Mousinho and a new move is now being explored. There have been murmurs of a potential return to Sweden, where he established himself as one of the leading performers, but it's believed it's too early to suggest that would be the first priority.



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# DIAS JOINS SUNDOWNS AS HEAD OF SCOUTING

*Mamelodi Sundowns have further strengthened their football operations with the appointment of respected Portuguese football administrator Pedro Dias as the club's new Head of Scouting, adding another experienced figure to an already formidable technical structure as the reigning African champions prepare for the 2026/27 campaign.*

Dias arrives at Chloorkop following the conclusion of his spell as Director of Football at AmaZulu FC, where he played a central role in shaping the club's football strategy, overseeing recruitment, squad planning and the broader technical direction of the first team. During his time at Usuthu, he established a reputation as a meticulous recruiter with a keen eye for identifying talent, helping the club target players capable of strengthening both the present squad and its long-term ambitions.

His appointment at Sundowns represents another significant investment by the Tshwane giants in the infrastructure behind the scenes, with the club continuing to reinforce every department as it looks to maintain its position among Africa's elite. While much of the spotlight inevitably falls on the players and coaching staff, Sundowns have long recognised that sustained success begins away from the pitch, with intelligent planning, detailed scouting and forward-thinking recruitment forming the foundations of a winning organisation.

As Head of Scouting, Dias will be tasked with leading the club's talent identification programme, overseeing domestic and international scouting networks while monitoring emerging prospects and established performers across multiple markets. His responsibilities are also expected to extend beyond the senior team, contributing to recruitment within Sundowns' renowned development structures and ensuring that the club continues to build for both the present and the future.

The Portuguese administrator brings with him a wealth of international experience. Before moving to South Africa, Dias held positions with Sporting Clube Lourinhanense in his homeland, having also worked in Canada with both Vancouver Whitecaps and Toronto FC, and in New Zealand,



experiences that exposed him to different football cultures, recruitment models and player development philosophies. Those experiences, combined with the relationships he has built across the African football landscape in recent years, are expected to prove invaluable as Sundowns continue to search for players capable of thriving within the club's demanding environment.

Recruitment has been one of the pillars of Sundowns' sustained dominance over the past decade, with the club consistently identifying players who not only possess technical quality but also fit the tactical profile and culture demanded at Chloorkop. The arrival of Dias signals an intention to refine that process even further as the Brazilians look to defend their CAF Champions League crown, reclaim the Betway Premiership title and remain competitive across every competition they enter.

With expectations higher than ever following their continental triumph, Sundowns are leaving little to chance. The appointment of Pedro Dias is another indication that while trophies are won on the pitch, they are often built through the careful work done behind the scenes long before a ball is kicked.

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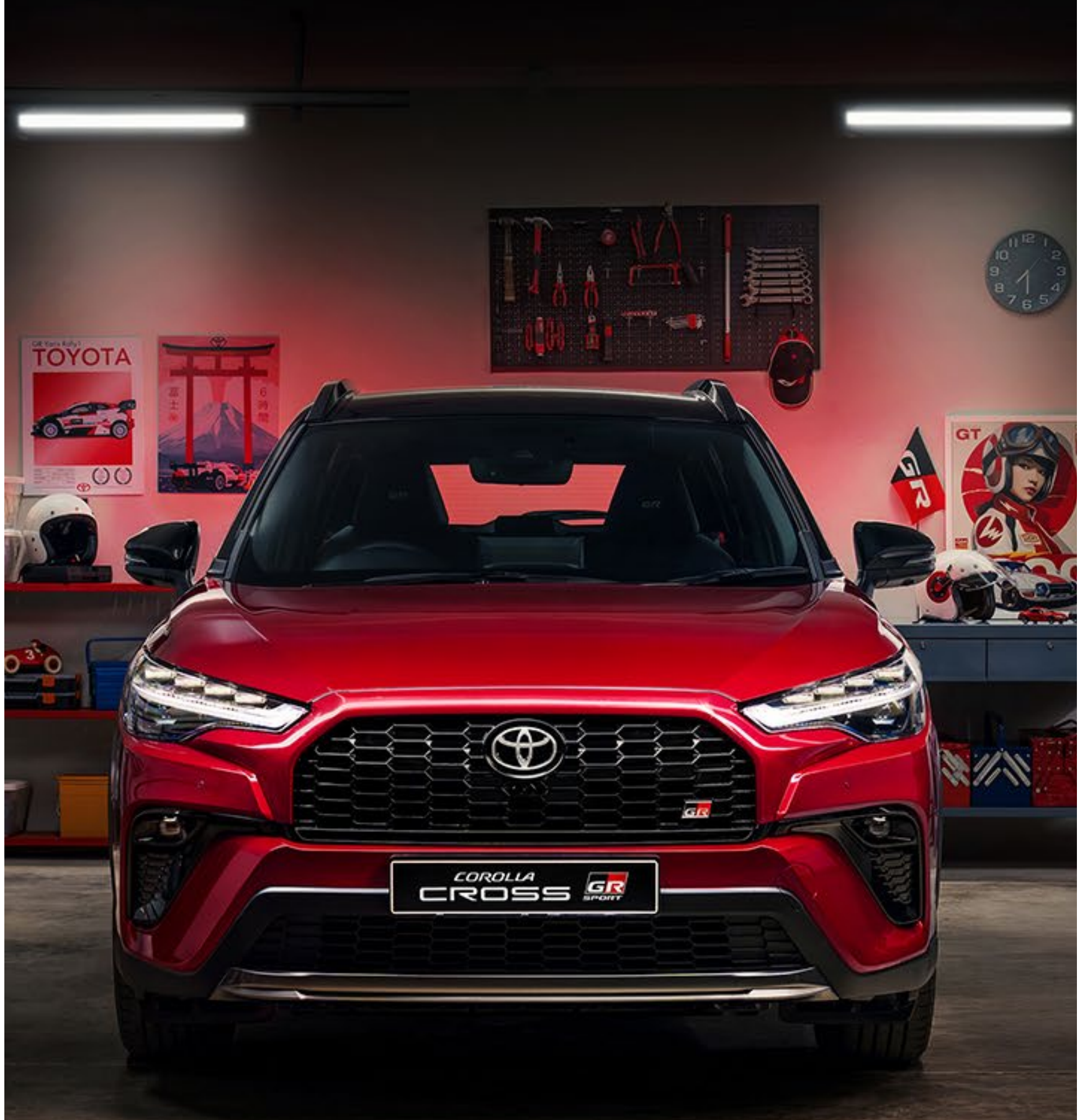
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# TSO REFLECTS ON 30 YEARS OF PSL

*The 2026/27 Betway Premiership season kicked off this week, the 30th year under the Premier Soccer League banner. It's set to be another enthralling campaign if the first weekend of action was anything to go by.*

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

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‘Congratulations To The Premier Soccer League’

“Congratulations to the Premier Soccer League for celebrating 30 years since it was established.

“Massive credit must go to Dr Irvin Khoza for being the pillar and the core of the organisation. The league is strong, enjoying success because of people like

Dr Khoza.

“I played in the league myself and made a small contribution by being a player and winning the league as a Pirates player.

“Congratulations to people such as Dr Jomo Sono and Dr Kaizer Motaung, and all club owners who have contributed to the growth of the league.

“The fans have pushed our league forward. We are nothing without supporters.

“All the clubs who have participated in top-flight football – People love the big teams, but we are a league because of all these clubs. Big teams don't play alone. All of our clubs are important.

“We look forward to covering the Betway Premiership this season and many more seasons in future.

“Our league is one of the best in Africa. We are happy to see it in good shape.”





# WHY THE GHOST IS DESPERATE FOR PIRATES TO WIN THIS YEAR'S MTN8

By Matshelane Mamabolo

*And now for a record-extending fifth successive title! Orlando Pirates' dominance of the MTN8 title is expected to continue unabated this season given the Buccaneers' strength in depth and the way they've mastered winning the season-opening tournament.*

**"PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL PLAYERS COME TO TRAIN, BUT AT THE END OF THE WEEK OF TRAINING, THEY NEED THEIR GIFT. AND THE GIFT IS THE GAME."**



Win it again, and Pirates will equal Kaizer Chiefs' record 15 successes in the competition reserved for the teams that finished in the top eight in the preceding season since its inception way back in 1972. Ironically, Pirates were the inaugural winners back when the tournament was known as the BP Top 8, and they went on to defend it the following year.

But Kaizer Chiefs took over and won the BP Top 8 a massive 12 times before the oil giants pulled out as sponsors after the 2002 edition. For five seasons thereafter, the competition was sponsored by South African Airways (SAA Supa 8) and produced five different winners – Amakhosi being among them while the Buccaneers watched in envy.

When Chiefs won the inaugural MTN8 in 2008 to go double the number of Pirates victories, it seemed like Amakhosi would remain the top eight kings forever. However, the Buccaneers slowly but surely worked their way into mastering early-season success as they won it back-to-back in 2010 and 2011.

The MTN8 then changed hands among eight clubs before the Buccaneers again became victorious during the Covid-19-induced bio bubble season in 2020. Sundowns interjected the following season before the Spaniard Jose Riveiro made the trophy Pirates' property for three successive seasons. Abdeslam Ouaddou ensured the status quo remained in his maiden season in charge of the previous campaign and will be hard-pressed to keep it this time around.

It will not be easy. Since the mobile phone giants took over as sponsors, only twice have the league champions gone on to win the MTN8. Pirates were the first to do so, capturing the 2011 edition shortly after they'd won the league in May of that year.

Mamelodi Sundowns are the other team to have won the competition while carrying the title of Premiership champions in 2021.

This Pirates team is a bit special though, and they will be looking to show just how by not only holding on to their MTN8 title but also by keeping all the trophies they won the previous season and more.

Winners of three



trophies – the MTN8, the Carling Knockout and the Betway Premiership – the Bucs are intent on dominating the domestic scene yet again while also shining much brighter on the continent where their local adversaries Mamelodi Sundowns reigned supreme.

They began their league title defence with a 2-0 victory over newcomers Milford FC and their coach Ouaddou believes squad depth will be one of the Buccaneers' biggest assets as they prepare for the demands of competing in multiple competitions, including a return to the CAF Champions League.

Ouaddou was speaking after admitting that he had close to eight players who were not even included in the Match-day squad for the Milford clash. All of those players could easily have started the game, underlining the strength of the group at his disposal.

For the Moroccan coach, however, having a deep squad is only beneficial if Pirates make the most of the opportunities presented by their crowded fixture schedule.

“To have depth is very important, as long as you qualify in all the competitions and you are going far,” Ouaddou said.

He believes progressing in every competition will also make managing a large squad considerably easier because players will have more opportunities to get meaningful minutes.

“It’s much easier to involve everyone in your group when you are competing in every competition,” he said. “Things start to be difficult when you play only one competition or two competitions.”

Ouaddou’s philosophy is built around keeping his entire squad motivated and ready, particularly because professional

**“THE MORE COMPETITIONS YOU PLAY, THE MORE CHANCES YOU CAN GIVE TO YOUR GROUP AND TO HAVE LESS PROBLEMS IN TERMS OF MANAGEMENT.”**

players ultimately want their hard work on the training ground to be rewarded with playing time.

“Professional football players come to train, but at the end of the week of training, they need their gift. And the gift is the game,” he said.

The Pirates coach therefore sees success across all competitions as more than simply a quest for trophies. It could also help him manage the expectations of a squad containing players who might otherwise struggle for regular opportunities.

“The more competitions you play, the more chances you can give to your group and to have less problems in terms of management,” Ouaddou said.

Pirates are set to juggle the demands of the MTN8, Carling Knockout, Betway Premiership, Champions League and Nedbank Cup, and Ouaddou believes a squad of around 30 outfield players, plus goalkeepers, would be manageable if they remain involved in all those competitions.

“If we have the chance to play them, 30 players is okay for me,” he said. “In 30, you add the goalkeepers, four goalkeepers, 30 players. With the goalkeepers, it’s 34.”





Injuries and suspensions, he added, make having sufficient numbers particularly important over a long campaign. But there is also a limit to how big a squad can become before it starts creating problems for the coach.

“More than that, to be honest, 35 now, it starts to be difficult because you cannot be really efficient in your work,” Ouaddou said.

Managing such numbers also requires the right support structures. Ouaddou pointed to the importance of having sufficient coaching staff and facilities, particularly training pitches, to ensure every player can be properly managed.

For a club with Pirates’ ambitions, depth is therefore not simply about having quality players on the bench. It is about creating a squad capable of surviving the demands of a season in which the Buccaneers want to remain in contention until the final stages of every competition.

And for Ouaddou, the best way to keep everyone happy is simple: keep winning and keep playing. The winning started with the opening league match and must now be transferred to this weekend’s opening game of the MTN8 against Durban City, whose start to the season was a defeat at Sekhukhune United.

City, winners of the Nedbank Cup in their rookie season in the elite league last campaign, are under the guidance of new coach Khalil Ben Youssef, who will be eager to show that he is a top coach in his own right, having led Chiefs to third place alongside Cedric Kaze as co-coaches.

It is a match the Buccaneers will be expected to win at their home ground of Orlando Stadium, where the fans again came in huge numbers at the weekend, although they were a bit subdued in their support of the team. They did make it known that they are excitedly anticipating the arrival of new Norwegian signing Sebastian Pedersen, the Ghost intermittently chanting like the Norway fans did for Erling Haaland at the World Cup.

**“[PEDERSEN] WILL BE PART OF THE COMPETITION. I THINK HE’S SOMEBODY WHO IS ENJOYING COMING TO SOUTH AFRICA IN A BIG CLUB. WE’RE EXPECTING HIM, AND I HOPE TO GET HIM QUICKLY IN OUR GROUP.”**

Ouaddou understands just how expectant their fans are of the new striker.

“Look, Sebastien will for sure join us. I think he has a profile that can help us with the others. We have [Boitumelo] Radiopane, we have [Yanela] Mbuthuma, we have [Evidence] Makgopa, we have [Sifiso] Luthuli. So he will be part of the competition. I think he’s somebody who is enjoying coming to South Africa in a big club. We’re expecting him, and I hope to get him quickly in our group. And I think the fans as well, they’re expecting him. They are very impatient to see him.”

What The Ghost is impatient for is to see their club catching up to the arch-enemy Chiefs in the number of top eight titles won. Victory in this year’s edition – a record-extending fifth successive MTN8 title – will ensure just that.

There are thus 15 good reasons for Pirates to want to hold on to their title.

**The full MTN8 fixtures:**

**Saturday, August 8**  
15:00 Orlando Pirates v Durban City  
18:00 Mamelodi Sundowns v Polokwane City

**Sunday, August 9**  
15:00 AmaZulu v Sekhukhune United  
18:00 Kaizer Chiefs v Golden Arrows



# THANK YOU, HUGO... NOW IT'S TIME



By Rob Delpont

*I am grateful for Hugo Broos. As a South African football supporter, as a journalist, and as someone old enough to remember what Bafana Bafana once were, I am genuinely grateful for everything he did for the national team during his record-five year tenure.*

But I am also grateful that the Hugo Broos era is now over. That may sound contradictory, but it isn't. It is possible to appreciate a chapter while still being ready to turn the page.

When Broos arrived in 2021, he inherited a national team that had lost its way. Not overnight. Not because of one coach, one administrator, or one generation of players. This was the result of years of drift. Years of false starts, missed opportunities, and declining expectations.

An entire generation of South Africans had grown up without really knowing what a consistently competitive Bafana Bafana looked like. There had been moments, certainly. There was 2010, a stunning friendly win over Spain, and even more recently, the victory over Egypt at the 2019 AFCON, a result that briefly reminded us of our potential. There were isolated performances and occasional flashes of hope.

But hope had become the exception rather than the expectation.

For too long, Bafana had become the great underachievers of South African sport. The Proteas carried the "chokers" label internationally, but if we're being honest, Bafana had already perfected the art of heartbreak. Qualification campaigns would begin with optimism and end with calculators, permutations and regret. We became specialists in falling just short.

One campaign after another slipped through our fingers. So after Molefi Ntseki's Bafana team lost to Sudan, ending AFCON qualification hopes, and when Broos arrived, I was encouraged.

**"I AM GENUINELY GRATEFUL FOR EVERYTHING HE DID FOR THE NATIONAL TEAM. BUT I AM ALSO GRATEFUL THAT THE HUGO BROOS ERA IS NOW OVER."**

As somebody who still remembers the excitement of the late nineties and early 2000s vividly, I recognised immediately that he brought something South African football had been lacking for years: structure, discipline and clarity.

But appreciation is not the same thing as agreement. I respected what Broos was doing. I didn't always enjoy watching it.

Broos is a pragmatic football man. An old-school European coach. A four-time Belgian Coach of the Year whose entire life has revolved around the game. Football runs through his veins.

But football is a universal language spoken with different accents. It can be in your blood and in mine, yet we can still see the game completely differently.

The football Broos believed in was not necessarily the football many South Africans believe in.

His approach was practical rather than romantic. Efficiency over expression. Stability over adventure. He was rarely interested in impressing people. He was interested in winning football matches.

And to his immense credit, it worked, to some degree.

I was never certain he was the perfect coach for South Africa. I was certain, however, that he was a better solution than most of the men who had preceded him.

That distinction matters.

Sometimes success isn't about finding perfection. Sometimes it's about simply

finding competence after years of confusion. Broos arrived at precisely the right moment.

The timing of his appointment should not be underestimated.

South African football was quietly producing one of its strongest domestic generations in years. The PSL was filled with experienced professionals. Young talent was beginning to emerge. The production line was starting to function again. The signs were already there. It's why Ntseki's failure against Sudan hurt more.

There is a reason South Africa recently won the U20 Africa Cup of Nations despite not even fielding the strongest squad available. There is a reason Bafana reached the semi-finals of the 2023 AFCON and qualified for the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

And in no small part, some of those reasons were Mamelodi Sundowns and, more recently, Orlando Pirates.

Many will dismiss that observation by arguing that the biggest clubs naturally provide the most players to the national team. That is true. But it misses the point.

The contribution of those clubs goes far beyond supplying footballers. They supplied winners, and winning is a habit.

Players who are accustomed to competing for trophies, handling pressure and performing in major continental competitions arrive in camp carrying a different mentality. They don't need to learn how to win. They already know. Without stars from abroad, it was key that local clubs delivered this scope of players.

Sundowns created that culture first. For years, they dominated domestically while proving themselves against Africa's best. More recently, Pirates have begun to develop a similar mentality. The confidence, resilience and professionalism we have seen in Bafana did not appear out of thin air.

Those traits were cultivated elsewhere before being brought into the national team environment. Broos deserves enormous credit for recognising and harnessing that reality. But perhaps the most important conversation is not about what Hugo Broos achieved. It is about what comes next.

Because this is where South African football has made mistakes before. The foundation is stronger than it has been in almost two decades. The challenge now is ensuring we build on it rather than dismantle it.

Those of us who remember what happened after Carlos Queiroz left have every reason to be cautious. South Africa once stood on the edge of becoming a consistently competitive football nation.

Then came a steady decline. Coaching quality dropped. Player standards dropped. Expectations dropped. And eventually, results followed.

There were countless explanations offered. The players were blamed. The commitment was questioned. Patriotism became a convenient talking point.



**“BAFANA HAD ALREADY PERFECTED THE ART OF HEARTBREAK. QUALIFICATION CAMPAIGNS WOULD BEGIN WITH OPTIMISM AND END WITH CALCULATORS, PERMUTATIONS AND REGRET.”**

But the truth was always more complicated. Certain coaches hindered progress. Relationships with players deteriorated. The environment became increasingly toxic. Talented footballers retired prematurely from international football or simply drifted away from the setup.

Instead of building a culture, we spent years damaging one. The Bafana jersey gradually lost some of its prestige.

By the time 2010 arrived, South African football was paying the price. To this day, it still feels almost criminal that players of the calibre of Benni McCarthy and Nasief Morris were not part of a World Cup on home soil. Regardless of the circumstances, that should never have happened.

Those years leading into 2010 were filled with more problems than solutions. Too often, the players “carried” the blame. Too rarely did administrators and coaches accept their share of responsibility.

Then came another decade of inconsistency. There were bright moments under Pitso Mosimane to begin with. There were exciting moments under Gordon Igesund.

But there were also disappointments, false dawns and appointments that felt more hopeful than logical. Shakes Mashaba's return always felt destined for a painful ending. Stuart Baxter's second spell felt like the final act of an old story rather than the beginning of a new one.

Molefi Ntseki's appointment felt less like a football decision and more like an ideological one. Continuity became the buzzword. Youth development became the justification.

But continuity only works when what precedes it is successful. Winning COSAFA tournaments should not be celebrated as extraordinary. Qualifying for youth tournaments should not be treated as a miracle. Those are minimum requirements.

Those are benchmarks. Those are the standards South African football should meet as a matter of routine.

Which is why, despite my disagreements with aspects of Broos' tenure, I believe his greatest achievement was something surprisingly simple.

He restored normality. He brought South Africa back to where South Africa should have been all along. Not above it. Not beyond it. Back to it.

He did not create the greatest Bafana side in history. He did not transform South Africa into a global football powerhouse. He simply stopped us from living below our station.

That matters.

For years, we acted as though qualification for AFCON was some impossible dream. For years, we celebrated reaching tournaments that we should have been attending automatically. Broos changed that mindset.

He reminded us that South Africa should qualify for AFCON consistently. South Africa should compete with Africa's strongest nations. South Africa should be challenging for World Cup qualification.

That should be normal. Not exceptional.

The next coach's task is therefore very different.

South Africans don't want a coach who merely preserves what exists. Fans want a coach who expands it. A coach brave enough to embrace South Africa's football identity rather than suppress it. One who understands that our uniqueness is our advantage.

Because those of us who live and breathe South African football know something that outsiders often miss.

An obsession with physique can become a trap. A fear of physically imposing opponents can lead coaches toward conservative selections that ultimately limit the team's potential. We've seen this movie before.

South Africa's football heritage was never built on power. It was built on imagination. Technique. Movement. Intelligence. Combination play. Rhythm.

When I reflect on the Broos era, those are the areas where I still feel a sense of unfinished business.

I look at the last five years and see a strong core emerging. I see leaders. I see individuals who have become pillars of the national team, like Ronwen Williams, Khuliso Mudau, Teboho Mokoena and Aubrey Modiba.

But I didn't see enough partnerships. I didn't see enough combinations. There was never a truly settled centre-back pairing. By the time we reached the World Cup, the back-line still felt under construction, although it was one area where at least we saw progress with the partnering of young Mbekezeli Mbokazi and Ime Okon.

In midfield, the only constant was Mokoena. The question was always who would play alongside him. Different combinations came and went. Few truly flourished.



**“THE NEXT COACH MUST TAKE BAFANA BAFANA FROM BEING COMPETITIVE TO BEING COMPELLING. FROM BEING ORGANISED TO BEING EXPRESSIVE. FROM MEETING EXPECTATIONS TO EXCEEDING THEM.”**

The same was true further forward, with Broos selecting several different attacking midfielders and strikers, though Oswin Appollis and Lyle Foster were more regular than others in the last two years.

And let us not forget that while we speak about an era, many of the current attacking relationships did not even exist during the bronze-medal campaign at AFCON.

Individuals can win matches. Combinations win eras. When we remember great teams, we don't remember isolated talents. We remember partnerships. We remember understanding. We remember chemistry. We remember movements that looked instinctive because they had been repeated a thousand times before. The best football teams become greater than the sum of their parts.

That is the challenge for whoever comes next.

Hugo Broos gave South Africa stability. He gave South Africa credibility. He gave South Africa hope. For that, he deserves immense gratitude. The bronze in the 2023 AFCON and qualifying for the knockout stages of the 2026 FIFA World Cup for the first time will always be remembered.

But now comes the harder task. The next coach must take Bafana Bafana from being competitive to being compelling. From being organised to being expressive. From meeting expectations to exceeding them.

The Broos era rebuilt the house. Now somebody else must turn it into a home.

Editor's Note: SAFA President Danny Jordaan has indicated that the new Bafana Bafana coach could be named on Saturday, August 8th after an NEC Meeting, following a recommendation from the SAFA Technical Committee. Bafana's next fixtures are AFCON qualifiers at the end of September.



**“GOOD COACHING  
EDUCATION PRODUCES  
GOOD COACHES,  
AND GOOD QUALITY  
COACHES PRODUCE  
GOOD PLAYERS.”**

## ‘IT’S NOT A TECHNICAL BRAIN DRAIN’

By Matshelane Mamabolo

*The debate over South African football's growing coaching exodus has largely been framed as a question of loss. Every time another accomplished local coach packs his bags for a lucrative opportunity elsewhere on the continent, the conversation inevitably turns to whether the Premier Soccer League (PSL) is being stripped of its finest technical minds.*

Manqoba Mngqithi's recent move to Tanzanian giants Young Africans has reignited that discussion. In an interview with us immediately after his appointment by Yanga, the former Golden Arrows and Mamelodi Sundowns coach openly questioned whether South African football should be concerned about the steady departure of experienced coaches, warning that the trend could eventually weaken the domestic game.

“I think it's good for us as individuals, but I don't think it's very good for South African football because a lot of prominent coaches are moving away from the league. You start to wonder what is going to happen in the next few years, because it is also important that we must also look at ourselves – our local league. But if our local league has to depend on foreign coaches, because most home-bred coaches are leaving, then I don't think it's the best thing,” Mngqithi told me in our interview published a fortnight ago.

He has a point. Ahead of the upcoming PSL season, six of the 16 elite league clubs are coached by non-South Africans. Many will argue that it is an improvement on previous seasons when foreigners dominated the PSL benches. But when you look at the make-up of the local coaches, the lack of experience is alarming.

Gavin Hunt is the most experienced of the lot and arguably the only one who can

seriously challenge for the championship. Brandon Truter is a distant second to Huntie when it comes to experience. That five of those are in charge for the first time while three have less than five seasons as head coaches makes Mngqithi's concern all the more understandable.

South African Football Association (SAFA) Technical Director (TD) Molefi Ntseki, however, sees a very different picture.

To him, the migration of South African coaches is not a technical brain drain but the clearest indication yet that years of investment in coaching education are finally paying dividends.

Rather than asking why coaches are leaving, Ntseki believes South Africans should be asking why so many clubs across Africa are eager to employ them.

“I think we must start with the players,” Ntseki says. “Good coaching education produces good coaches, and good quality coaches produce good players.”

His argument reaches beyond the touchline.

For years, South African football wrestled with criticism that it was no longer producing enough players capable of making an impact on the international stage. The country's best talent appeared increasingly content to remain at home, while Europe's top leagues and even many African powerhouses looked elsewhere.

Ntseki believes that the narrative has begun to shift.

“There were serious complaints that we were not producing international players who would leave South African football as ambassadors,” he tells me during our interview. “But now our players are going overseas and we are happy to see that





happening. We celebrate it. I think we should look at our coaches in exactly the same way.”

For Ntseki, the two developments are inseparable. Better coaches create better footballers, and the growing international demand for both is evidence that the country’s football development structures are maturing.

He points to the progress made by South Africa’s national teams over the past decade.

The junior men’s and women’s teams have consistently qualified for major international tournaments, while Banyana Banyana have reached successive FIFA Women’s World Cups and the Olympic Games under South African coaches.

“In the past we had foreign coaches with Banyana but we didn’t achieve those successes,” Ntseki reasons. “We have also seen a big exodus of women players going outside the borders of South Africa. That calls for celebration because it tells us our football is growing.”

The same philosophy, he argues, should apply to coaches.

Pitso Mosimane blazed the trail, first by delivering Mamelodi Sundowns’ historic CAF Champions League triumph before enhancing his reputation at Al Ahly and in the Middle East. His success challenged long-held perceptions about the ceiling for South African coaches on the continent.

Others have since followed.

Rulani Mokwena took charge of Wydad Casablanca after building one of the most dominant teams in the PSL and has since coached in Algeria and Libya. Just last week the young coach was unveiled as the new man at the helm of Egyptian side Pyramids FC. Fadlu Davids had success with Simba SC and was only recently in charge of Raja Casablanca. Morena Ramoreboli transformed his career in Botswana, where his club success eventually led to the national team job. Steve Barker recently enjoyed double-silverware in Tanzania, while Eric Tinkler is the latest to venture north after taking charge of Ghanaian giants Hearts of

Oak.

Mngqithi’s appointment at Young Africans is the newest chapter in a story that continues to gather momentum.

To Ntseki, those appointments are neither isolated nor accidental.

“They are getting opportunities to become ambassadors of South African football,” he says. “It means our coaching education department is doing well, and individually they have shown that they deserve those opportunities.”

His evidence extends beyond head coaches.

Ntseki points to Serame Letsoaka’s appointment as Botswana’s Technical Director and his work as a FIFA regional consultant. Keneilwe Mathibela has graduated into FIFA’s instructor ranks, while Junaid Mahlo and Frans Mogashoa continue to serve as FIFA instructors. South African goalkeeper coaching specialists are now delivering courses across the world.

Taken together, Ntseki believes they reflect a coaching ecosystem that has earned international respect.

“We have been leading on the continent when it comes to coaching education,” he says, the pride in his voice unmistakable. “We were doing Level One and Pro Licence courses many years before CAF introduced the current licensing system. Some of the coaches we are talking about have the highest qualifications available.”

That is why he disagrees with suggestions that South African football should fear losing its technical expertise.

“It might look like a technical brain drain,” Ntseki acknowledges. “ But as Technical Director, I am saying it is a good thing. These coaches are going there to share their expertise, but they are also going to learn from the countries they are working in. One day they will come back and South African football will benefit from those experiences.”

It is an argument built on exchange rather than departure.



**“IT MIGHT LOOK LIKE A TECHNICAL BRAIN DRAIN, BUT AS TECHNICAL DIRECTOR, I AM SAYING IT IS A GOOD THING. THESE COACHES ARE GOING THERE TO SHARE THEIR EXPERTISE, BUT THEY ARE ALSO GOING TO LEARN FROM THE COUNTRIES THEY ARE WORKING IN.”**



Just as foreign coaches have spent years bringing new ideas into South African football, Ntseki believes local coaches now have an opportunity to export their own tactical identity while broadening their horizons.

“The bigger challenge we have in South Africa is that we are too comfortable,” he laments. “We stay within our borders, and sometimes we don’t know what it is like out there. As much as it is good for our players to go overseas, I believe it is also good for our coaches to explore.”

Recent appointments suggest South African expertise is travelling with them.

Benni McCarthy assembled a largely South African technical team after taking over Kenya’s national side. Mngqithi has taken no less than two assistants of his own choosing at Young Africans.

For Ntseki, that represents another important milestone.

For years, South African football complained about clubs appointing foreign coaches who arrived with entire technical teams, often at the expense of local coaches. Now the roles have begun to reverse.

“We have been complaining about foreign coaches coming here with their technical teams,” Ntseki says. “Now our coaches are going to other countries and taking their own technical teams. That tells you something.”

The movement of coaches abroad, he insists, should also be viewed as an opportunity rather than a threat for those waiting in the wings.

Every vacancy created by a departing coach allows another to emerge, while the success of Mosimane, Mokwena and others has encouraged more PSL clubs to entrust local coaches with high-profile jobs.

“Opportunities used to be very scarce,” Ntseki recalls. “But clubs are now more open to giving South African coaches opportunities because they have seen what they can achieve. We have a number of clubs trusting local coaches now, and that is a positive.”

Ntseki accepts that coaching remains an unforgiving profession where timing often determines success as much as ability.

“You can be a very good coach, but sometimes the timing is just not in your favour,” he says, that statement fraught with an experience he himself lived while in charge at Kaizer Chiefs.

“But when coaches work hard and achieve results, they create more confidence in South African coaches.”

Football, he adds, never stands still.

New tactical ideas, sports science and coaching methodologies continue to reshape the game, making international exposure increasingly valuable.

For Ntseki, the growing demand for South African coaches is confirmation that the country’s football education structures are keeping pace with those changes.

“The fact that our coaches are being sought after this way is confirmation of that,” he beams. “We are now exporting our expertise and our knowledge of the game. For me, we are on the right track.”

Whether Mngqithi’s concerns ultimately prove justified will only become clear with time. But Ntseki is convinced South African football should not measure success by how many coaches it manages to keep at home.

Instead, he believes the real measure lies in how many are deemed good enough to succeed beyond its borders – and in the knowledge that, when they eventually return, they will bring back experiences capable of strengthening the very game they once left behind.



# THE LIST OF COACHES

## IN THE BETWAY PREMIERSHIP

### FOR THE 2026/27 SEASON

#### FOREIGNERS



**ORLANDO PIRATES –**  
**ABDESLAM OUADDU** (MOROCCO)



**MAMELODI SUNDOWNS –**  
**MIGUEL CARDOSO** (PORTUGAL)



**KAIZER CHIEFS –**  
**FERNANDO DA CRUZ** (FRANCE)



**SEKHUKHUNE UNITED –**  
**CEDRIC KAZE** (BURUNDI)



**SIWELELE FC –**  
**LEHLOHONOLO SEEMA** (LESOTHO)



**DURBAN CITY –**  
**BEN KHALIL YOUSSEF** (TUNISIA)

#### LOCALS



**STELLENBOSCH FC –**  
**GAVIN HUNT**



**CHIPPA UNITED –**  
**BRANDON TRUTER**



**AMAZULU –**  
**ARTHUR ZWANE**



**MARUMO GALLANTS –**  
**PHUTI MOHAFE**



**RICHARDS BAY –**  
**RONNIE GABRIEL**



**TS GALAXY –**  
**BERNARD PARKER**  
(ROOKIE)



**GOLDEN ARROWS –**  
**PITSO DLADLA**  
(ROOKIE)



**MILFORD FC –**  
**DR XANTI PUPUMA**  
(ROOKIE)



**KRUGER UNITED –**  
**ABRAM MONGOYA**  
(ROOKIE)



**POLOKWANE CITY –**  
**WILLY MOLOTO**  
(ROOKIE)

# ‘WE OWE THE CLUB A TROPHY’



*Sekhukhune United captain and veteran defender DANIEL CARDOSO feels it’s overdue for the club to win a trophy after their consistent good performances in South Africa’s top division. Babina Noko won the inaugural pre-season Mafori Cup tournament, held in Seshego two weeks ago, something Cardoso hopes will inspire a winning mentality in the side this season. Sekhukhune, who also won their opening Betway Premiership fixture, finished inside the top 8 in four of their five seasons in the Betway Premiership and have been to a Cup final once, where they lost to Orlando Pirates in 2023. Last season, the closest they got to a cup final was in the MTN8, where they fell at the semi-final stage. The Limpopo side is also under the guidance of a new coach, Cedric Kaze, someone Cardoso tells iDiski Times journalist LETHABO KGANYAGO in this edition can bring good fortunes and even qualify for a CAF inter-club competition. Cardoso, 37, also speaks about Kaze’s faith in young players and his own stamina to still be able to deliver at a mature age.*

**Lethabo Kganyago:** Danny, thank you for speaking to us. Firstly, what’s the importance of a pre-season tournament, something we hardly see in Limpopo...

**Daniel Cardoso:** Yeah, it’s very important. We’ve got so many teams in Polokwane that have been competing and that can compete. There are so many good teams out here in Polokwane that I think this was much needed. I think it’s a great initiative from Mafori. It would have been nicer if it started a few years back. You know, it brings everyone together. Polokwane as a whole loves football. If you see when we play against [Kaizer] Chiefs, against [Orlando] Pirates, we fill up the stadiums, and I think the football passion is all there. And for us as Sekhukhune United, it’s great to be in it. I think a mini-pre-season tournament just before the league starts, a great stepping stone for us to actually get going and to lift the trophy and to hold the trophy for the next year that’s coming is great for us. So I think it’s come at the right time, one week before our league kicked

**“I THINK THIS SEASON WE DO HAVE TO WIN A TROPHY; THERE’S NO NEGOTIATIONS ABOUT THAT.”**

off, and we stamp our foot on authority in Polokwane. The past four seasons we’ve finished well above Polokwane City, which I think already shows that we are serious. Last season we started off great; we went seven or eight games unbeaten, and unfortunately we dropped the ball. I thought we had a very good squad that could actually compete and go and win the league. Unfortunately, that wasn’t meant to be, and we get another chance now again.

**LK:** Just touching on that, reflections of last season having started so well and then that slump you went through, then picking up and just coming so close with cup competitions. What can you say when you look at last season?

**DC:** Yeah, look, I think it’s a learning curve. Yes, we started off very well, and then we had a bit of a slump, but it happens in football. All the best teams in the world go through it, and unfortunately, we just couldn’t get over that slump. We went a few games that we couldn’t recover from, and I think if we had won two or three more games, we would have finished in the top three. We were so close to getting that top three spot, but again, like I say, we get another chance now. I think we do owe the club a trophy. I think this season we do have to win a trophy; there’s no negotiations about that. We haven’t sat down as a team as yet to discuss what our goals are for the season, where we want to finish the season, what trophies we want this season. So I think that’s very important as a team that we need to get to the drawing board and start doing that. But yeah, I think you know MTN8 is one of the easiest trophies to win. There are only four games, and

you are in the final. So I'm hoping that winning the Mafori Cup, even though it's not an official trophy and all of that, maybe it will give the boys a bit of a taste of what winning trophies is and just getting that winning feeling and getting used to the winning feeling.

**LK: Now you are starting on a clean slate with a new coach. Having spent some time with him, what do you make of him?**

**DC:** He seems like a great coach. He brought Chiefs where they are; they haven't finished in the top three in quite a few seasons. And that's when I was back at Chiefs when we came second and lost it on the last day, so props to him. I think he's been with us, and we just got to buy into his philosophy. I think we have had more than enough time to work with him, and all the prep we've been doing will show, and we can start on a good note. We are there to give him our full support because he has given his full coaching ability that he can, and I think we can learn a lot from him. So Chiefs finished third; he's come to us from Chiefs, and I think that we definitely want to go back into Africa. I think a lot of the boys need to experience that African football. It's a lot different to what South African football is. You know you are playing against boys that are tough, especially the North Africans. I think it's something that we all need to pull our weight towards and finish in the top three.

**LK: A lot of experience lost from last season in terms of the players; you are sort of in a rebuilding phase. How has the transition been in pre-season with the younger players? Could it be a problem in the future?**

**DC:** Look, I think if you see across all the teams, a lot of teams are going for younger players, you know they have the energy, they fight. AmaZulu have done well last season by doing that. They reshuffled their whole side; they left one or two experienced players. All the South African teams are trying to buy into that. And I hope that it actually works. We've got quite a few good youngsters that will come and that have been showing it at training. So I'm hoping that the energy comes out when the season starts, not just during training, and bring their full potential. The coach believes in the youngsters, as you heard, and he wants to promote youngsters, and I think we'll see a lot of youngsters break through.

**LK: And for you personally, could this be your last season with Sekhukhune? Are you still feeling strong enough to be playing professionally?**

**DC:** Yeah, of course. Look, I personally think I still have another two or three seasons to give. Age is just a number; it's been proven across the world. If you look at [Lionel] Messi and [Cristiano] Ronaldo, still playing in the World Cup, setting records, breaking records. I do believe that I still have a lot to give to the game, whether it be at Sekhukhune or wherever else in the future; you never know. But I'm committed to Sekhukhune; it's a team that I want to stay with until



**“CHIEFS FINISHED THIRD; HE [KAZE] HAS COME TO US FROM CHIEFS, AND I THINK THAT WE DEFINITELY WANT TO GO BACK INTO AFRICA.”**

I start coaching. That's whenever it happens, but I'm not ready to give up my footballing career as yet. And when the time is right, I'll hang up my boots, but that might be in the near future.

**LK: But are you currently kind of looking at doing your badges while you're still active? It's been a trend recently with a lot of players...**

**DC:** Yeah, of course, of course. Look, I've already started my coaching journey. I have my own academy, so it's definitely something that I'll get into. But while I'm playing, I don't want to lose focus on playing and giving my energy to my coaching badges and coaching while I'm still playing because it does get draining. So I'd rather give my heart out on the field for as long as I can until my legs say enough is enough. But until then, I'm not looking back, and I'm looking forward. And like I say, if I can play another two seasons, I'll be happy with that.

**LK: Thank you, Danny, and all the best this season.**



# THE IDISKI TOP 10... SIGNINGS TO WATCH

*This week, iDiski Times turns its attention to 10 new faces who could shape the story of the 2026/27 Betway Premiership season, as clubs across the country usher in a fresh chapter filled with renewed ambition, bold recruitment and the hope that the right signing can transform an entire campaign.*

*With almost every team strengthening during the transfer window, supporters have plenty of reasons to be excited. Some clubs have invested in proven performers ready to make an immediate impact, while others have gambled on emerging talent capable of developing into the league’s next big stars. Whether arriving from rival Premiership clubs or from overseas, every new signing carries the weight of expectation and the opportunity to write their own story.*

Our selections are based on recent performances, supported by statistics, ratings and analysis from a range of leading football analytics companies.

To qualify, a player must be South African and have joined their current club during the 2026/27 transfer window, and before the

start of the campaign (up to 31 July 2026).

Please note: This list is not ranked in any particular order. Every player included is someone we believe could become one of the standout signings of the new Betway Premiership season.

## The Top 10:

**10 Thabo Moloisane**  
**Kaizer Chiefs**

*Joined from Stellenbosch FC*

Few defenders in South African football have built a reputation for consistency quite like Thabo Moloisane, whose steady rise over the past few seasons has been rewarded with both national recognition and a move to one of the country’s biggest clubs. Having impressed whenever Hugo Broos called upon him for Bafana Bafana, Moloisane now arrives at Kaizer Chiefs carrying the responsibility of helping restore defensive stability to a side that has undergone yet another reshaping at the back. His journey is also one of perseverance, having left the comfort of Mamelodi Sundowns’ academy to carve out his own identity through Cape Town All Stars, Maritzburg United and eventually Stellenbosch, where he matured into one of the Betway Premiership’s most dependable centre-backs. Calm under pressure, dominant in the air and rarely guilty of making poor decisions, Moloisane looks like exactly the type of leader Chiefs have been searching for.

**9 Sinoxolo Kwayiba**  
**Stellenbosch FC**

*Joined from Chippa United*

Sinoxolo Kwayiba’s career has already experienced enough twists to remind everyone that football seldom follows a straight road. His move to Orlando Pirates generated considerable excitement after an outstanding season at Chippa United, but opportunities proved limited at Mayfair, and an early return to Gqeberha allowed him to remind everyone exactly why he had attracted attention in the first place. Almost immediately he rediscovered his rhythm, producing energetic, influential performances that earned praise once again and demonstrated that his quality had never disappeared. Now Gavin Hunt has handed him another opportunity to prove himself on a bigger stage, and it feels like the ideal environment for a player whose versatility, work ethic and willingness to



drive forward could add another dimension to Stellenbosch's midfield. Sometimes all a footballer needs is belief and the right fit, and Kwayiba may have found both.

**8 Gape Moralo**  
**AmaZulu**  
*Signed from Siwelele*

Not every excellent footballer arrives surrounded by headlines, and Gape Moralo has quietly become one of the league's most reliable midfield performers through consistency rather than fanfare. A graduate of the renowned School of Excellence, Moralo patiently waited for his opportunity after making his senior debut during the 2019/20 season, before eventually establishing himself as an indispensable figure several years later. Whether at SuperSport United or Siwelele, he earned the respect of teammates and coaches alike through intelligent positioning, composure in possession and an ability to knit attacks together without demanding the spotlight. Arthur Zwane now inherits a midfielder entering the prime years of his career, and if Moralo continues to produce the understated excellence that has defined his recent seasons, AmaZulu may have secured one of the smartest pieces of business of this transfer window.

**7 Kyle Jurgens**  
**Durban City**  
*Signed from Stellenbosch United*

Some transfers simply make too much sense, and Kyle Jurgens' permanent move to Durban City falls comfortably into that category after an impressive loan spell convinced the club they simply could not allow him to return. The former Ubuntu Football graduate quickly became one of City's most influential performers, combining relentless energy with tactical intelligence and the versatility to fulfil several different midfield roles whenever required. He is one of those players coaches adore because every performance guarantees commitment, discipline and an unwavering willingness to fight for every loose ball, while supporters appreciate the passion with which he wears the badge. Having already settled into the environment and earned the trust of those around him, Jurgens now has the platform to continue growing into one of the league's most dependable midfielders.

**6 Cassius Mailula**  
**Mamelodi Sundowns**  
*Signed from Toronto FC, Canada*

While he's yet to be officially announced, few returning players arrive home carrying as much unfinished business as Cassius Mailula. His outstanding breakthrough campaign with Mamelodi Sundowns earned him a dream move to Major League Soccer, but opportunities at Toronto FC never quite arrived with the consistency required for a player still finding his feet abroad. Loan spells at Wydad AC and later Belgian side KV Kortrijk offered glimpses of his undeniable talent, yet they also served as reminders that football careers rarely unfold exactly as planned. Now spotted back at Chloorkop, Mailula has returned older, wiser and perhaps with a renewed appreciation for the environment where his career first flourished. At just 25 years old, there is still plenty of football ahead of him, and with Sundowns chasing domestic dominance and continental success once more, this could prove the perfect stage for one of South Africa's brightest attacking talents to reignite

his career.

**5 Mthetheleli Mthiyane**  
**Orlando Pirates**  
*Signed from Stellenbosch*

Mthetheleli Mthiyane's rise has been remarkably swift, and deservedly so. After joining from Milford, the hardworking defensive midfielder needed only a single season at Stellenbosch to convince reigning champions Orlando Pirates that he belonged at one of the country's biggest clubs. Despite Stellies enduring an inconsistent campaign, Mthiyane consistently stood out through mature performances that suggested he had been playing top-flight football for years rather than months. His reading of the game, defensive discipline and willingness to do the unglamorous work in midfield immediately caught the eye, and although competition for places at Pirates is fierce, players with his profile often become invaluable over the course of a demanding season. If he adapts quickly to life in black and white, Mthiyane could quietly become one of the Buccaneers' most important acquisitions.

**4 Neo Rapoo**  
**Orlando Pirates**  
*Signed from Siwelele*

Neo Rapoo represents both the present and the future. Still only an Amajita star with his best football undoubtedly ahead of him, Rapoo arrives at Orlando Pirates after an outstanding campaign with Siwelele, where his athleticism, technical quality and attacking ambition repeatedly caught the eye. Comfortable at left-back, wing-back or further forward on the flank, he offers the kind of versatility modern coaches crave, while his fearless approach suggests the



occasion will never intimidate him. Pirates have built an exciting young squad capable of challenging on multiple fronts, and Rapoo feels like another carefully selected piece of that long-term puzzle. If his development continues at its current trajectory, it may not be long before conversations about his future include not only Bafana Bafana but eventually Europe as well.

3 Ronaldo Van Neel

Golden Arrows

Signed from Hungry Lions

Every transfer window produces one signing from outside the spotlight capable of surprising everyone, and Ronaldo Van Neel may well be that player this season. The only footballer on this list recruited directly from the Motsepe Foundation Championship, the former Hungry Lions striker arrives after a prolific campaign in which his 13 goals almost carried the Northern Cape side into the promotion playoffs. Intelligent and composed inside the penalty area, Van Neel possesses the qualities that often translate well to higher levels, provided he adapts quickly to the increased intensity and physical demands of Premiership football. Golden Arrows have an impressive history of identifying hidden gems before they blossom, and they will hope Van Neel becomes the latest success story, particularly following Siyanda Ndlovu’s departure to Mamelodi Sundowns.

2 Thabiso Sesane

Siwelele FC

Signed from Orlando Pirates

Football can change quickly. Not so long ago, Thabiso Sesane was one of Orlando Pirates’

most dependable defenders, but injuries and the remarkable emergence of Mbekezeli Mbokazi and Lebone Seema, together with fierce competition for places, gradually pushed him out of the spotlight. That should never overshadow the qualities he possesses. Calm in possession, physically commanding and tactically disciplined, Sesane remains a centre-back with considerable ability, and his move to ambitious Siwelele offers exactly the fresh start his career needed. Rather than viewing this transfer as a step backwards, it could become the perfect opportunity to rebuild confidence, rediscover rhythm and remind South African football why he was once regarded as one of the country’s brightest defensive prospects. Sometimes a new beginning is exactly what reignites a career.

1 Antonio Van Wyk

Mamelodi Sundowns

Signed from SV Ried, Austria

Antonio Van Wyk returns to South African football as a more complete player than the exciting youngster who first left these shores. During his spell with Austrian side SV Ried, the former Stellenbosch and Ubuntu Football graduate refined his game in one of Europe’s demanding leagues, developing greater tactical awareness while retaining the creativity, flair and unpredictability that made him such an exciting prospect in the first place. His outstanding 2025/26 campaign convinced Mamelodi Sundowns to bring him home, believing he possesses the qualities required to strengthen a squad intent on reclaiming the Betway Premiership crown while defending their CAF Champions League title. Blessed with technical quality, confidence in one-on-one situations and the imagination to unlock stubborn defences, Van Wyk has the type of attacking brilliance that can change matches in an instant. If he settles quickly, few new signings may have a greater influence on the destination of trophies this season.

Tip Of The Iceberg

The beauty of every new football season lies in its unpredictability, and with clubs having been so active in the transfer market, narrowing this list down to just 10 players was never going to be an easy task. Numerous other new arrivals could just as easily have featured, while the transfer window remains open until September, meaning there is still plenty of time for clubs to strengthen further and for a few more headline-making signings to arrive before the business of the season truly settles into rhythm. As always, some of the biggest success stories will probably come from players who arrive with little fanfare before quietly transforming the fortunes of their new clubs.

What is already clear, however, is that the 2026/27 campaign promises to be one of the most fascinating in recent memory, with fresh coaches, revamped squads, emerging youngsters and established stars all combining to create a season filled with intrigue from the very first whistle. The opening weekend has already delivered excitement, drama and talking points in abundance, offering an early glimpse of what could be a fiercely contested campaign, and throughout the months ahead, iDiski Times will continue shining the spotlight on the players, personalities and performances that shape the story of South African football, introducing readers to both the league’s newest arrivals and the familiar faces determined to leave an even bigger mark this season.



IDISKI'S BETWAY PREMIERSHIP

TEAM OF THE WEEK

1 - 2 Aug 2026

ST



DUBA

ST



JEZA

LM



APPOLLIS

MC



DANSIN

MC



MORALO

RM



MOREMI

LD



BALITI

CD



MAJADIBODU

CD



SEEMA

RD



MANTHOSI

GK



NWABALI



ACE OF THE WEEK:  
RELEBOHILE MOFOKENG

This week’s iDiski Times Ace of the Week can only be one man: Relebohile Mofokeng, whose European adventure could hardly have begun in more memorable fashion. Just days after arriving in Belgium, President Yama2000 made his official debut for Union Saint-Gilloise in the Belgian Super Cup final against Club Brugge, entering the contest from the bench with his new side trailing 1-0. USG fought back to level the score shortly afterwards, sending the match to a dramatic penalty shootout, where the pressure could hardly have been greater. Showing the composure that has become one of his trademarks, the 21-year-old stepped up to take his team’s fifth and decisive spot-kick, coolly converting to seal the trophy for Union Saint-Gilloise. It was a moment that spoke volumes about his confidence, temperament and willingness to embrace responsibility on one of Belgian football’s biggest stages. A debut, a trophy and the winning penalty – Relebohile Mofokeng could scarcely have wished for a better start to life in Europe.



# The World & South Africa

*We continue our 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.*

ZUMA THE PUMA

By Rob Delpoit

*There are footballers who enjoy successful careers abroad, and then there are those rare few who become woven into the fabric of another country’s football culture. Sibusiso Zuma belongs firmly in the latter category. To South Africans, he will always be remembered as one of Bafana Bafana’s finest attackers of the modern era, but to supporters in Denmark, he is something far greater than a former foreign import. He is a club legend, an icon whose greatest goal has quite literally been immortalised in bronze.*

Affectionately known as “Rhee”, Zuma was born on 23 June 1975 in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, and from an early age, football became both his escape and his purpose. He honed his talent at local side Mighty Pa before beginning his professional career with African Wanderers in 1995, a club that proved to be the perfect platform for one of South African football’s most exciting attacking generations.

Alongside Siyabonga Nomvethe and Phumlani Mkhize, Wanderers possessed one of the country’s most devastating front lines. The trio played with freedom, speed and imagination, terrorising defenders across the country, and during the 1997/98 season alone, they combined for more than 30 goals, announcing themselves as some of the Premier Soccer League’s brightest attacking talents. Although Wanderers ultimately suffered relegation, the damage had already been done. Bigger clubs were watching.

Orlando Pirates moved swiftly to secure the signatures of Zuma and Mkhize, while Nomvethe crossed the divide to join Kaizer Chiefs. It was the beginning of a new chapter, and Zuma wasted little time establishing himself as one of the league’s most electrifying footballers. Blessed with explosive pace, quick feet and an instinctive ability to produce moments of brilliance, he quickly became a favourite among Buccaneers supporters, who marvelled at his fearless approach and willingness to entertain.

Yet behind the dazzling performances lay a far more personal story. In the acclaimed 2002 documentary Zuma the Puma, Zuma revealed a painful truth about his upbringing. While countless young footballers dream of making their families proud, Zuma spent much of his youth searching for approval that never

truly came. His father never believed football would amount to anything and rarely attended his matches, choosing work instead. Even after Zuma completed his move to Orlando Pirates in 1998, his father remained unconvinced, reminding him that, “The good players play for the national team.” Those words would forever carry bittersweet significance. The day before Zuma was due to make his senior Bafana Bafana debut in October 1998, his father passed away. The approval he had chased throughout his childhood would never come, yet perhaps that moment also strengthened his resolve to make his name impossible to ignore.

Only two years later, Europe came calling.

In June 2000, Zuma completed what would become one of the finest overseas moves ever made by a South African footballer, signing for Danish giants FC Copenhagen. While many African players require lengthy periods of adjustment after arriving in Europe, Zuma embraced his new surroundings remarkably quickly. His pace, flair and unpredictability immediately captured the imagination of Copenhagen supporters, who had rarely seen a player capable of producing magic from almost nothing.

The 2000/01 campaign transformed him from an exciting newcomer into one of the best footballers in Scandinavia.

As Copenhagen battled fierce rivals Brøndby for the Danish championship, everything came down to the final derby of the season. The stakes could hardly have been higher.

Then came the moment that would define an entire career.

With extraordinary athleticism and flawless technique, Zuma launched himself into the air and connected with an unforgettable bicycle kick that flew beyond goalkeeper Mogens Krogh and into the top corner. Parken Stadium erupted. Copenhagen secured a famous 3-1 victory, clinching the Danish championship, while Zuma had created a piece of footballing art that would echo through Danish football history.

It was later voted Danish Goal of the Year. Years later, supporters voted it the greatest Superliga goal of the entire decade.

Then they went one step further. In 2013, FC Copenhagen unveiled a permanent monument outside Parken Stadium



depicting Zuma's iconic bicycle kick, ensuring generations of supporters would forever remember the South African who gave them one of the greatest moments in the club's history.

Very few footballers anywhere in the world can say a statue celebrates a single goal. Sibusiso Zuma can.

His influence at Copenhagen extended far beyond that magical evening. During five-and-a-half remarkable years at the club, he consistently delivered match-winning performances, helping establish FC Copenhagen as Denmark's dominant force while earning the admiration of teammates, coaches and supporters alike.

Recognition followed naturally. In 2001, Zuma finished tied for 29th in the FIFA World Player of the Year voting, an extraordinary achievement for a player performing in Scandinavia. He was later inducted into FC Copenhagen's Hall of Fame, and in 2006, supporters voted him the greatest foreign player ever to wear the famous white shirt.

For many Danish fans, he simply became "Zuma the Puma", a nickname that perfectly reflected both his explosive style and his enduring popularity.

By 2005, Zuma had conquered Denmark and was ready for another challenge. German Bundesliga side Arminia Bielefeld secured his services for €1 million, and although his spell in Germany perhaps lacked the spectacular highs of Copenhagen, he remained a dependable performer across three seasons, making 69 appearances and scoring eight goals while competing in one of Europe's toughest leagues.

In 2008, after nearly a decade abroad, Zuma returned home to join Mamelodi Sundowns. His stay in Tshwane proved relatively brief before Denmark called once more. FC Nordsjælland offered him another opportunity, and despite now wearing different colours, Copenhagen supporters demonstrated the affection they still held for their former hero.

When Nordsjælland visited Parken Stadium in March 2010, Zuma produced another excellent display before being substituted late in the match. As he walked from the pitch, thousands of Copenhagen supporters rose to their feet and applauded him warmly. It was an emotional homecoming. A visibly moved Zuma later admitted he would never forget that reception.

Following his second Danish adventure, Zuma returned permanently to South Africa, spending a season with Vasco da Gama in Cape Town before concluding his playing career at SuperSport United, where he remained until announcing his retirement in 2015.

His international career deserves equal recognition. Between 1998 and 2008, Zuma earned 67 caps for Bafana Bafana, representing South Africa at the 2002 FIFA World Cup and captaining the national side at the 2006 Africa Cup of

Nations. Blessed with pace, intelligence and a fearless attacking mentality, he became one of the faces of Bafana during a transitional era, consistently carrying the hopes of a football-mad nation.

Yet perhaps one of his greatest achievements has come away from the spotlight.

In 2010, Zuma established the Sibusiso Zuma Foundation, dedicating himself to supporting young people affected by HIV while promoting education, awareness and prevention throughout local communities. It was another reminder that footballers can leave meaningful legacies beyond goals and trophies.

Looking back today, Sibusiso Zuma's career stands comfortably among the greatest European success stories South African football has ever produced. He conquered Denmark, earned respect in Germany, represented his country with distinction and left memories that continue to inspire supporters on two continents.

Twenty-five years after producing that goal that became part of Danish football folklore, Zuma returned to Copenhagen to a hero's welcome, proving that some moments never fade with time. The club honoured him again during commemorations marking the 25th anniversary of his iconic bicycle kick, supporters queued outside the fan shop for the chance to meet him and collect an autograph, and when he appeared at Parken Stadium he was greeted with a prolonged standing ovation from thousands of adoring fans. It was a fitting reminder that, a quarter of a century later, his unforgettable moment remains woven into the fabric of the club's history, and that the legacy of "Zuma the Puma" continues to live on in the hearts of Copenhagen supporters.

Many players are remembered for trophies. Some are remembered for statistics. Sibusiso Zuma will forever be remembered for a moment suspended in mid-air, a bicycle kick that became a symbol of brilliance, and a career that proved South African footballers could not only succeed in Europe but become legends there.

