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# Soccer Club

ISSUE 117

KNOW YOUR GAME

**+**  
HOW SA  
SOCCER  
REACTED TO  
COVID-19

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## A NEW BALL GAME

The coronavirus pandemic has changed the face of football forever

# Killer Blow



**MOGAMAD ALLIE**

*SoccerClub Editor*

The Covid-19 pandemic has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives and infected millions around the globe, bringing the world to a virtual standstill since March and has left South African football with an enormous headache.

Due to the massive economic impact, the continued practice of social distancing that includes limitations on national and international travel for the foreseeable future, it's clear football in this country won't simply be able to pick up where it left off in March.

Many clubs in the PSL and the GladAfrica Championship, particularly those without sponsors, are going to have to significantly downsize their operations. Sadly, there may also be a few that will have to put up 'For Sale' signs. With the prospect of their lifeblood in the form of their respective monthly grants of R2-million and R500 000 being cut or even suspended, a number of clubs will have no alternative than to streamline their non-playing staff.

Players and technical teams are also at risk of either having their contracts terminated or enduring pay cuts, as a growing number have already experienced. The days of players demanding lucrative salaries are clearly numbered. Clubs simply won't be able to afford the huge



pay cheques and signing-on fees that were on offer before the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic.

While income through sponsorships, grants and advertising are set to diminish substantially, clubs can also expect their expenses to skyrocket, particularly when one considers that the cost of travel and accommodation are bound to increase significantly as a result of continued social distancing. Planes, for example, will in all likelihood be able to carry only a third of their normal passenger load which would mean an increase in the price of tickets. If and when action does resume, crowd numbers will also have to be limited, choking off another income stream for clubs.

Crucially, SuperSport, the pay channel which finances the R2-million monthly grant to clubs through its R2-billion broadcast deal with the PSL, has also

**MANY CLUBS IN THE PSL AND THE GLADAFRICA CHAMPIONSHIP, PARTICULARLY THOSE WITHOUT SPONSORS, ARE GOING TO HAVE TO SIGNIFICANTLY DOWNSIZE THEIR OPERATIONS**

been massively affected by the cancellation of hundreds of major international and national sport events. Advertisers, already short of cash themselves, have been loath to spend on a broadcaster that has been forced to screen events of yesteryear, as historic and spellbinding as they may be.

At a time when money is short and problems continue to mount, some creative thinking will be required to salvage the game in this country. What is clear, though, is that things won't be the same again post-Covid-19. ■

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**Due to Covid-19 regulations, we have not been in a position to hold our monthly competition draws.**

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### SoccerClub readers respond to Hlompho Kekana downplaying talks of a Sundowns exit ...

**Eddie Seeletse** I knew that was a bunch of blatant lies, captain my captain. He is a true soldier tied to Mamelodi Sundowns until retirement.

**Moses John** SuperSport got their hopes up.

**Felix Muchunu** Again, all the talk around Kekana is hot air. We love him at Downs.

**Walter Msimango** Kekana will stay and show why he is a leader of our team.

**Maxwell Dlamini** The sky is the limit with Hlompho in yellow.



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Footballers around the world have been playing their part in trying to ease the pain of the coronavirus

# Kicking Back



BEN STANSALL / POLINA PETRENKO / GETTY IMAGES / GALLO IMAGES

**W**ith competitive leagues around the world being suspended and many clubs wondering how they will balance their books, key figures in football have stepped up; not only for the game but also in the fight against Covid-19. There's no doubt that good news is in short supply but many top players and coaches, led by magnanimous gestures by Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo, have been trying their utmost to give back.

Messi, who was one of the first Barca players to commit to a 70% pay cut to ensure his club's staff could continue



receiving a salary during the suspension of La Liga, made a donation of 1-million euro toward the fight against the deadly disease. This was split between Hospital Clinic in Barcelona and a medical centre in Argentina.

April hosted World Health Worker Week and Messi used his fame and outreach – he has 148 million followers on Instagram – to praise and encourage those on the frontline of fighting the disease.

'Together with Unicef, I want to express my deepest gratitude for the work they do,' wrote the six-time Ballon d'Or winner. 'Anonymous heroes who endure long days and nights away from their families, so that ours can be safe from Covid-19. For continuing, despite everything, their noble commitment to caring for pregnant women, and keeping children and adolescents protected.'

Sports psychologist Tom Bates wholeheartedly praised the player: 'If there was a global example of a player out there doing something for the greater good of their club, he embodies that for me. In my professional opinion, if you can afford that and if you're able to support by taking a pay cut, then clearly those who need it the most are going to benefit.'

## THE CONTRIBUTION FROM RONALDO AND HIS AGENT WILL PAY FOR 15 INTENSIVE CARE BEDS FULLY EQUIPPED WITH VENTILATORS AND OTHER VITAL EQUIPMENT

Ronaldo and his agent Jorge Mendes matched Messi by donating three intensive care units for coronavirus patients at hospitals in Portugal. The hospitals said the contribution from the Juventus forward and his agent will pay for 15 intensive care beds fully equipped with ventilators and other vital equipment. Another two units of 10 beds will be set up in Lisbon.

The Centro Hospitalar Universitario do Porto says the unit will be named after Ronaldo and Mendes and will be of 'great use at a time when the country needs it the most'.

In Germany, Robert Lewandowski and his wife Anna kicked off a relief campaign by donating 1-million euro to a fund set up by his Bayern teammates Leon Goretzka and Joshua Kimmich called 'We Kick



Corona'. The German national football team added 2.5-million euro to the cause.

Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola, whose 82-year-old mother died of the disease in April in Barcelona, made a similar contribution of a million euro to a campaign launched by the Angel Soler Daniel Foundation and Medical College of Barcelona for the acquisition and supply of health equipment.

Ronaldo's former mentor Jose Mourinho was another famous figure to step up. He joined charity group Age UK and community organisation Love Your Doorstep – based near Spurs' training ground in Enfield – to deliver food parcels to elderly residents in north London.



## IN IT TOGETHER

Fifa and the World Health Organisation teamed up to combat the coronavirus by launching an awareness video, led by world-renowned footballers, who are calling on all people around the world to follow five key steps to stop the spread of the disease.

The 'Pass the message to kick out coronavirus' campaign promotes the key steps for people to protect their health in line with WHO guidance, focused on hand washing, coughing etiquette, not touching your face, physical distance and staying home if feeling unwell.

'We need teamwork to combat the coronavirus,' said Fifa president Gianni Infantino. 'I call upon the football community worldwide to join us in supporting this campaign. Some of the greatest players to have played the beautiful game have put their names to the campaign and are united in their desire to pass the message to kick out Covid-19.'

A total of 38 players are involved, ranging from current stars – such as Lionel Messi and Alisson – to past heroes like Gary Lineker, Michael Owen, Yaya Toure and Samuel Eto'o.



'I'm giving a little help to Age UK Enfield and Love Your Doorstep Enfield and, of course, you can donate food, money or be a volunteer. It's so easy to contact,' he said.

Two of Mourinho's former clubs, Chelsea and Manchester United, were also at the forefront of relief efforts. The Blues made the Millennium Hotel at Stamford Bridge available for National Health Service (NHS) staff in west London. The Red Devils pledged to continue paying the 3 000 casual matchday staff their wages for the duration of the time that Old Trafford was in lockdown.

In a similar theme, Manchester United legend Gary Neville provided free hotel beds for NHS workers in two of the hotels he part-owns with ex-United colleague Ryan Giggs, while Spurs defender Toby Alderweireld pledged to donate computer tablets to hospitals and nursing homes to allow people in isolation and quarantine to video chat with friends and family.

Football, like all sports and industries around the world, has been hit with bad news but there have been, as highlighted, numerous instances of players and those involved in the game making efforts to give back. And, as the world continues its recovery, it would not be surprising to see even more footballers contributing to relieve those battling the hidden enemy. ■



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# A New Ball Game

Football as we knew it may never be the same again after Covid-19. By **Mogamad Allie**

Like most other sectors of South African society, football came to a grinding halt when PSL chairman Irvin Khoza announced in mid-March that the league would be suspended until further notice.

Despite futile and controversial attempts a few days earlier to allow games to continue behind closed doors, the issue was put to bed by President Cyril Ramaphosa's declaration of a national state of disaster. A three-week lockdown, later extended, of all activities deemed non-essential would have a massive impact on life as we knew it.

Mamelodi Sundowns' 1-0 win at Stellenbosch FC on Wednesday 11 March was the last top-flight game to be played before the lockdown. By the end of April



there was still no clarity as to when the league campaign, which was due to end on 9 May, would resume.

If the 2019-20 season is to be completed – and an exciting climax to the title race, headlined by Kaizer Chiefs and Mamelodi Sundowns, was unfolding – it certainly won't be a case of simply picking up where they left off. With some medical experts predicting that South Africa's coronavirus infection rate would peak only in September, it's clear that much of the country will still be under some sort of lockdown.

The remaining fixtures could still take place but if they do the matches will probably be played in empty stadiums. With the health of everyone involved being of utmost importance, the infrastructure

to screen and test players, technical staff, referees and whoever else is deemed necessary to be inside the stadium, will have to be in place.

While most in the football industry have been trying to keep themselves busy with all sorts of novel activities, the situation has still caused its fair share of issues. Thankfully, the PSL's grant, a sizeable sum of R2-million per month to Absa Premiership teams and the R500 000 for those campaigning in the GladAfrica

League, should help tide clubs over during the crisis. Unfortunately, it is unclear how long the PSL will be able to maintain the payments.

'The league only gets money from matches that are being played,' PSL acting CEO Mato Madlala explains. 'If there is a cup competition, we get a certain percentage. So it hurts everyone when there are no matches.'

'The sponsorship and TV commitments owed to the PSL are not paid up front. It

# R2-billion

The amount pay TV broadcaster SuperSport paid for a five-year broadcasting rights deal for the PSL in South Africa that extends to 2022

# THE PSL'S GRANT SHOULD HELP TIDE CLUBS OVER DURING THE CRISIS

doesn't work like that. People can ask for the money back. We have seen that in other places around the world right now where people are asking for it back.

'The commitment is for a certain product to be delivered and if it is not, there is no payment. Even you and I, if we don't work, people don't pay us. I cannot make a guarantee that all the grants will be paid until June. It's for the exco to decide.'

SuperSport potentially holds the key to sustainability of clubs, particularly those without sponsors who depend on the monthly grant to run their operations. Yet, with no broadcasts of the live sport that is the lifeblood of SuperSport, its advertising revenue stream would have been severely curtailed.

As Farook Kadodia, chairman of Maritzburg United tells *SoccerClub*, the next six months are likely to provide a clearer indication about the future of the sport in this country.

'Everyone is anxious to see how the sponsors will react to the situation. We cannot plan a budget for the new season without knowing exactly what our income will be. Without planning it will tough. The break has also had a huge impact on the growth of our brand. Things were going well after we reached the Telkom Knockout final and climbed to a really good fifth place on the log with six games remaining.

'When we grow our brand we grow our income because fans buy club merchandise and register with the supporters club. It took us a long time to build the brand and the fallout of the pandemic will put us back 10 years.

'Much will depend on how quickly the economy is able to recover. Also, travel could be a problem because the airlines are in trouble and we don't know what impact the break has had on hotel pricing.'

Amid all the uncertainty, what is clear is that until a vaccine has been successfully tested, social distancing will continue, which could well result in big matches like the Soweto derby being played in empty stadiums. ■



MUZI INTOMBELABACKPAGEPIX

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# Call me 'Schillo'

*SoccerClub* looks at the stories behind South African soccer's famous nicknames. Next up Steven Pienaar ...



It was after the 1990 World Cup – Salvatore Schillaci played very well (winning the Golden Boot) and I always told my friends I wanted to be like him. So when I began to make it as a footballer, people started calling me 'Schillo'.



# Oh, so Close

The table was laid in 2011 for Ajax Cape Town to clinch their first league title and only they know how they blew it. By **Mogamad Allie**

---



own title challenge, should have made things easier for Ajax.

Attention that afternoon was focused on the three venues where the title chasers were in action. At the Cape Town Stadium, the Orlando Stadium where Pirates – two points adrift – were facing Golden Arrows and at Durban’s Moses Mabhida Stadium where Kaizer Chiefs – one point behind Pirates – were up against AmaZulu.

Despite the Urban Warriors showing signs of nerves – manifested by their struggle to convert chances – Khama Billiat opened the scoring two minutes before half time to send the home crowd into raptures.

But the script was torn up in the next 20 minutes. First, former Bafana Bafana goalkeeper Hans Vonk opened the door for Maritzburg with a horrendous miskick that allowed Gert Schalkwyk to sneak in the equaliser on the hour mark. Ten minutes later, former Ajax striker Diyo Sibisi cast sentiment aside as he coolly slotted home a penalty to give the visitors a shock lead.

Throwing everything into attack, Foppe de Haan’s talented side did everything but score and, despite Sameehg Doutie’s 87th-minute equaliser, a crestfallen Urban Warriors squad and their expectant fans were left stunned by what had transpired over the previous two hours. Meanwhile at the Orlando Stadium, Zambia international

## AT ORLANDO STADIUM, ZAMBIA INTERNATIONAL ISAAC CHANSA NETTED A LONG-RANGE CRACKER TO SECURE A 2-1 WIN

Isaac Chansa netted a long-range cracker six minutes from time to secure a 2-1 win over Arrows and with it, Pirates ended an eight-year league title drought.

Pirates and Ajax finished level on 60 points but Ruud Krol’s team nicked the trophy on goal difference. Chiefs ended on 59 points and Sundowns on 58 in what is still the tightest margin between the top four finishers in the history of the PSL.

‘I was gutted,’ former Ajax midfielder Brent Carelse tells *SoccerClub*. ‘Even though I had won two league titles with SuperSport and one with Sundowns, I wanted to win the title in my home town of Cape Town and with the club I played at for most of my early career.

‘It was even worse for the players who had never won a title before. They were distraught. Our dressing room was like a graveyard. We were by far the better team but just couldn’t convert our chances. It’s still painful when I think about it now, nearly 10 years later.’ ■

A balmy afternoon and a festive atmosphere created by an expectant crowd of 20 000, including a buoyant Cape Minstrels troupe clad in sparkling green outfits. Everything seemed perfectly poised for Cape Town Stadium to host an almighty Ajax Cape Town victory party on Saturday 21 May in 2011.

Going into the final day of the season, all eight fixtures were being played at the same time and the Urban Warriors were strong favourites to secure their first Premiership title. Facing a Maritzburg United side that had nothing to play for after avoiding the relegation axe in their penultimate game, courtesy of an unlikely 3-1 home win over Mamelodi Sundowns’ that ended the Brazilians



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# Moving Up

Jermaine Seoosenwe is ready to take her opportunities as her reputation grows to match her ability. By **Nick Said**

**T**he number of Banyana Banyana players at overseas clubs has increased dramatically since the 2019 Fifa Women's World Cup, which illustrates the value of competing on the biggest global stage. One of those is striker Jermaine Seoosenwe, who joined Spanish side Real Betis in February to start a new adventure in one of Europe's top women's leagues.

Although her progress has been stunted by the pause in global football due to the coronavirus pandemic, the 26-year-old is hopeful that she can leave a lasting impression. Her aim is to earn an extension to her contract by helping the side avoid relegation this season.

'I will try to do my best. Whatever the coach and my teammates need, I am here to work hard. We just have to keep staying positive. If we continue with that energy and stay positive, keep working hard and determined, we will save the situation and get some wins,' she says.

Since making her debut, Seoosenwe has helped Betis take seven points from a possible nine before the league's postponement, which has moved them two points clear of the drop zone. Betis have finished sixth in each of the past three seasons, and would welcome a similar finish after a difficult start.

Seoosenwe is not the only star from Africa in Betis' ranks. They also have

Nigeria international Alice Ogebe and Cameroon's Michaela Abam. Seoosenwe was previously with Lithuanian side Gintra Universitetas, where she played in the Uefa Women's Champions League, and spent four years at Samford University in the United States, racking up 39 goals in 80 appearances.

Her latest move is no doubt just another step on her path to a bright future. ■

**'I WILL TRY TO DO MY BEST. WHATEVER THE COACH AND MY TEAMMATES NEED, I AM HERE TO WORK HARD'**

The Banyana star has an impressive Twitter following as interest continues to grow around the nation's best players

**17 100**



## FAST FACTS

**FULL NAME:** JERMAINE SEOOSENWE  
**DATE OF BIRTH:** 12 OCTOBER 1993  
**PLACE OF BIRTH:** CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA  
**HEIGHT:** 1.68m  
**PLAYING POSITION:** FORWARD  
**US COLLEGE SIDE:** SAMFORD

**LEBOGANG MANYAMA (KAIZER CHIEFS)**

The attacking midfielder endured a difficult first campaign at Chiefs last year but has returned with some swagger this season and has been a driving force behind Amakhosi's good fortunes. With six goals and eight assists in his 21 Premiership appearances before the league's suspension, Manyama has once again proved to be a constant goal threat and a danger through his set-piece delivery and crosses, many of which have led to goals for Chiefs. His comeback from a nightmare debut season has been nothing short of inspiring. He has also kept himself fit, which has been a vital factor in recapturing the form of his impressive 2016-17 campaign that earned him the Player of the Season award.

**GABADINHO MHANGO (ORLANDO PIRATES)**

The forward joined Orlando Pirates from Bidvest Wits amid much fanfare in July 2019 but struggled to find his best form after the departure of then head coach Milutin Sredojevic. The 27-year-old showed signs of improvement under interim coach Rhulani Mokwena before

exploding into life after Josef Zinnbauer joined the club. His sublime form saw the frontman surge up the scoring charts. The Malawian's 14 goals in 21 league games has turned the Buccaneers into title contenders and helped keep Zinnbauer's naysayers at bay.

# Fab Five

*SoccerClub* picks five players who earned hero status among their fans this season before play was halted. By **Dean Workman**





### **RICHARD OFORI (MARITZBURG UNITED)**

Goalkeepers are often not given the praise they deserve but Ofori's impact at Maritzburg has been so dynamic it's hard not to sing his praises. The Ghanaian shot-stopper kept 10 clean sheets, conceding just 17 goals in 22 league games, in helping Maritzburg United move up to fifth in the standings. His form has seen the likes of Pirates and Sundowns come knocking. He is likely to have plenty of suitors when the transfer window reopens.

### **THEMBA ZWANE (MAMELODI SUNDOWNS)**

The mercurial Sundowns attacker again showed his class by being one of the most influential players in Pitso Mosimane's team in their fight for silverware on several fronts. Mosimane was forced to rotate his squad but could not risk Zwane's absence and, as a result, he remained a mainstay with only injury or suspension forcing him out of the starting XI. Zwane has contributed nine goals and five assists in all competitions this season. There's little wonder 'Mshishi' is considered a hero among the Downs faithful.



### **BONGI NTULI (AMAZULU)**

At the time of the league's suspension, AmaZulu may have been sitting in the promotion/relegation playoff spot but they were level on points with the two teams above them and were just four points off 10th. Usuthu's chance of survival is down to Ntuli. The 29-year-old forward is responsible for a high percentage of the club's goals, having scored 12 of their 14 in the league this season. Ntuli has fast developed into his team's talisman and, in the process, has certainly turned into a hero in KwaZulu-Natal. ■





# Recognising **the Best**



**WHAT HAPPENED?**  
November 2005's El Clasico had a stunning outcome. Not for the fact Barcelona hammered Real Madrid 3-0, but for Los Blancos fans, in their own stadium, standing to applaud Brazil legend Ronaldinho after his stunning brace. It was a year to remember for the Brazilian star who won the inaugural FIFPro World Player of the Year in September. He added the European Footballer of the Year accolade and the Fifa World Player of the Year to enhance his rich CV later in the season.

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# Floundering

## Five

*SoccerClub* selects five players who have endured difficult campaigns and frustrated their fans. By **Mazola Molefe**



### **JAMES KOTEI (KAIZER CHIEFS)**

After what was expected to be a career-defining move to Kaizer Chiefs at the start of the 2019-20 season, the Ghanaian midfielder did not even get to put on the Amakhosi jersey in an official match and had his contract terminated after just six months. The 26-year-old came as a free agent at the end of his contract with Tanzanian giants Simba SC and signed a three-year contract as one of three foreign internationals to join the Glamour Boys, along with Lazarous Kambole and Samir Nurkovic. Chiefs confirmed his departure in January.

## THABO QALINGE (SUPERSPORT UNITED)

A move to SuperSport United for 'Section' at first appeared a coup for Matsatsantsa, given that he did not cost a cent after becoming a free agent at the end of his Orlando Pirates contract. But the warning signs were there – Qalinge had to spend a few weeks on trial at the Tshwane outfit before coach Kaitano Tembo would give his recommendation for the board to sign him, and when they did he was offered only a one-year contract. It comes as no surprise then that he is likely to be leaving the club at the end of the season, having failed to cement his place in the team.



## BONGANI SAM (ORLANDO PIRATES)

After his breakthrough season in top-flight football with Bloemfontein Celtic, Pirates won Sam's signature over several other suitors. It has not turned out to be the best move for either party so far. The junior international defender has made only two appearances in all competitions for the Buccaneers, who signed 10 other players this season. Sam might have moved to a club the size of Pirates too soon – another year at Celtic would probably have done wonders for his career. There is a silver lining, however. He is only 22 and has enough time to bounce back.



## THUSO PHALA (BLACK LEOPARDS)

He played for Bafana Bafana at two Africa Cup of Nations tournaments and was, at one point, the highest paid player at SuperSport United. But the career of this former Kaizer Chiefs and Mamelodi Sundowns wing seems headed for a less glamorous end after Black Leopards terminated his contract in April – two months before it was due to end. While Phala did feature in at least half of Lidoda Duvha's games, he failed to live up to the Limpopo club's expectations when he arrived among other elite players like Thabo Matlaba, Cuthbert Malajila, Mogakolodi Ngele and Madagascar international 'Dax'.



## PATRICK TIGNYEMB (CHIPPA UNITED)

The Cameroonian goalkeeper left Celtic under a cloud after a 12-year stint that had many believing he would retire in Bloemfontein. Tignyemb went to Chippa United, known for axing players in a huff for poor performances, where he managed to start 12 matches and conceded 13 goals. That led to the early termination of his contract, which he has argued was unlawful and the matter has been taken up by his lawyers. Tignyemb's axing aside, he would have probably not have kicked a ball again even if Chippa had kept him on their books. ■

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# Three of a Kind

*SoccerClub* looks at three bright England stars ready to make their mark on the world stage

## JOE GOMEZ (LIVERPOOL)

Among an uninspiring generation of English centre backs, former Charlton defender Gomez has stood out as a genuine talent. He's had to battle back from serious knee, ankle and leg injuries to force his way into one of the greatest Premier League teams in history, but achieved both with consummate ease. The 23-year-old should now be a shoo-in for England's next international competition.



## MASON MOUNT (CHELSEA)

After shining on loan at Vitesse and Derby in the past two seasons, Mount was given the chance to excel at Stamford Bridge under his hero Frank Lampard. As one of Chelsea's main creative outlets this term, the 21-year-old has risen to the challenge. England manager Gareth Southgate is said to be a big fan.

## AARON WAN-BISSAKA (MANCHESTER UNITED)

Wan-Bissaka is already faring better at United than the last Croydon-raised star prised from Crystal Palace's academy – and seems set to stay at Old Trafford for much longer than Wilfried Zaha. The Red Devils were happy to fork out £50-million for the young full back, whose nickname of 'spider' is a tribute to his leggy ball-winning and one-on-one harrying technique. His next goal will be to prove his worth for the Three Lions.



# Back to Basies

Kaizer Chiefs attacking midfielder Lebogang Manyama has settled in and is delivering his best for Amakhosi. By **Nkareng Matshe**

**A**fter winning the Absa Premiership Footballer of the Year award in 2016-17, Lebogang Manyama's career took a notable nosedive. But he is on the cusp of completing a great comeback with Kaizer Chiefs this season.

The big gong – which he won after helping Cape Town City to the Telkom Knockout trophy and also becoming

the Premiership's top scorer – was followed by a predictable, and hasty, move abroad. Turkish side Konyaspor, reportedly armed with 6-million euros, came knocking for the man who had scored 13 league goals to clinch the Golden Boot.

It all looked so promising as Manyama, at his peak at the age of 26, headed to Turkey. But things didn't go as planned. He cut a forlorn figure in foreign climes,

his loneliness exacerbated by a failure to convince Konyaspor's hierarchy that he deserved game time.

Returning to South Africa became the sensible option for Manyama after a forgettable 2017-18 season. Chiefs surprisingly won the race to sign him, but the misery was not over for the attacking midfielder. In October 2018, just as he was beginning to find his feet at Naturena, he was involved in a serious car accident that left him with a fractured right arm and severely bruised right leg.

This unfortunate accident saw him miss a handful of matches and then a knee injury in January 2019 kept him out of action until almost the end of the campaign. Chiefs' poor form limped on without him and, infamously, lost the Nedbank Cup final to NFD side TS Galaxy to complete a laughable season.

Amakhosi have had many heroes in their turnaround from the travails of last season but an injury-free Manyama could be said to be the catalyst. While the spotlight has fallen on Serbian Samir Nurkovic's goals, Manyama has contributed immensely.

He has scored goals at important times – most notably in the 1-0 wins over Golden Arrows and Orlando Pirates – to secure wins for Amakhosi. His delivery from the dead ball has also helped Nurkovic.

It's no surprise that Manyama is again being mentioned among the Player of the

**AMAKHOSI HAVE HAD MANY HEROES IN THEIR TURNAROUND FROM THE TRAVAILS OF LAST SEASON BUT AN INJURY-FREE MANYAMA COULD BE SAID TO BE THE CATALYST**



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Year candidates. It was also no surprise that he made a return to the Bafana Bafana set-up a few weeks before the coronavirus pandemic put a halt to all football.

Born in Tembisa in September 1990, Manyama was spotted by SuperSport United's scouts playing amateur football in Alexandra. But it was at Ajax Cape Town where he made a name for himself, forming a fearsome partnership with Khama Billiat and Thulani Serero. He rejoined SuperSport before going to Black Aces, who were renamed Cape Town City after a status acquisition in 2016.

However, he needed a bigger platform to showcase his true talent and, barring injuries, he should lead Chiefs to the promised land when football returns. ■



# 7

Manyama has scored seven goals in all competitions this season and has provided nine assists, which makes him one of Amakhosi's leading attacking contributors

A soccer match scene with a referee in the foreground and a cheering crowd in the background. The referee is wearing a white and black striped jersey with an Adidas logo and a 'MANN UP' patch. The crowd is blurred, showing people in various colors, some with their arms raised. A white banner with the word 'Glad' is visible at the bottom.

# HAPPY JELE'S RALLYING CRY

'The most important thing is to stay at home and be safe. So, South Africa, let's stand together in solidarity to defend against this Covid-19 opponent.'

Glad



# Rumour Room



**LESEDI KAPINGA** (BLACK LEOPARDS TO MAMELODI SUNDOWNS)

The Leopards star is said to be on his way to Chloorkop after reportedly signing a pre-contract deal. He is one of Lidoda Duvha's standout performers this campaign, having scored six goals and assisted a further six in 26 appearances across all competitions. That put Kapinga's name in the spotlight and attracted the interest of a number of top Premiership clubs. However, it appears Sundowns have won the race to capture the 24-year-old's signature.

**RUSHINE DE REUCK** (MARITZBURG UNITED TO MAMELODI SUNDOWNS/ORLANDO PIRATES)

The 24-year-old is enjoying a stellar season and has started all of Maritzburg's 29 games in all competitions. De Reuck's impressive showing at the heart of the defence has reportedly garnered interest from Mamelodi Sundowns and Orlando Pirates. However, the player has reiterated that his focus remains with the Team of Choice.

**SIYANDA XULU** (MARITZBURG UNITED TO ORLANDO PIRATES)

Xulu has played a key role in defence for the Team of Choice under head coach Eric Tinkler and has been linked with a move to Orlando Pirates. The fact he is in his last six months of his contract adds fuel to the rumour fire. Apart from the Buccaneers, the former Mamelodi Sundowns and Kaizer Chiefs defender has also been linked with a move to Bidvest Wits.

**THABO RAKHALE** (CHIPPA UNITED TO KAIZER CHIEFS)

The former Orlando Pirates wing has reportedly turned down an option to extend his contract at the Chilli Boys. The dribbling wizard has been linked with a possible move to Kaizer Chiefs but Amakhosi will first need to win their appeal against a two-window transfer ban, imposed on them by Fifa for the 'illegal' signing of Madagascar midfielder Dax.

*SoccerClub* looks at 10 players linked with potential transfer moves when the market reopens. By **Dylan Appolis**



### KNOWLEDGE MUSONA (RSC ANDERLECHT TO MAMELODI SUNDOWNS)

The 29-year-old was linked with a move to Mamelodi Sundowns earlier this season after he struggled for game time at Anderlecht. He has since joined another Belgian side, KAS Eupen, on loan but it has done nothing to diminish talk of a return to South Africa. The former Amakhosi star could still sign for Masandawana after head coach Pitso Mosimane publicly declared his interest in signing the Zimbabwe national captain.



### AUBREY NGOMA (MAMELODI SUNDOWNS TO AJAX CAPE TOWN)

The former Cape Town City wing is believed to be heading back to the Mother City, but not to his previous employers. Grant Margerman's move to Chloorkop reinforced rumours that Ngoma could be going the other way. He has struggled for game time at Sundowns and has been limited to just four appearances this season. However, his future will be discussed once the season is completed. Should Ajax gain promotion back to the top flight, Ngoma will likely be heading back to the Cape.



### THULANI HLATSHWAYO (BIDVEST WITS TO ORLANDO PIRATES/MAMELODI SUNDOWNS)

The Buccaneers are long-time admirers of 'Tyson' and were keen to sign the defender even before the start of this season. However, Wits offered him an improved contract, extending his stay to at least June 2022, and slapped a hefty price tag on their captain in the hope of fending off any suitors. The Bafana Bafana captain, though, continues to attract interest and could be in the centre of a bidding war between Pirates and Sundowns.

### AYANDA PATOSI (CAPE TOWN CITY TO FOOLAD KHUZESTAN FC)

Patosi is reportedly keen on leaving Cape Town City for good by making his loan spell at Foolad Khuzestan FC permanent, having enjoyed his scheduled six-month stint at the Iranian club. The former KSC Lokeren midfielder has made four appearances in the Persian Gulf Pro League, finding the back of the net twice.

### PHUMLANI NTSHANGASE (BIDVEST WITS TO MARITZBURG UNITED)

Ntshangase is set to see his six-year stay at Wits come to an end when his contract expires at the end of the season. The KwaZulu-Natal-born midfielder is on a season-long loan spell at Maritzburg United, where he seemed to have revived his career, having played 13 matches in all competitions for Eric Tinkler. He has been outstanding in the middle of the park and is expected to pen a permanent transfer.



### BRADLEY CROSS (BIDVEST WITS TO ENGLAND)

Bidvest Wits defender Bradley Cross is reportedly attracting interest from Premier League giants Manchester City, Arsenal and Liverpool. The 19-year-old defender is on loan at Bundesliga outfit Schalke 04 and is expected to return to Wits at the end of the current campaign, having already spent two seasons with the Royal Blues. Cross has one year left on his contract, which opens the door for a departure should Wits be ready to cash in on the highly-rated teenager.

# Go Figure

SoccerClub adds up the numbers of the PSL at the point the league was suspended. By **Dylan Appolis**



**36.3M**

Khama Billiat's **market value in rands**, which makes the Kaizer Chiefs forward the league's most valuable player.

The number of **goals scored** this season, an average of 2.17 per match.

**403**

**111**

The number of **foreign players** plying their trade in South Africa's top flight, which makes up 20.3% of all the players in the league.



**14**

The number of **goals scored** by Orlando Pirates striker Gabadinho Mhango, who sits on top of the league's scoring chart.

**10**

The longest **winless run** in the league this season, held by Chippa United who continue to chop and change their technical team.

**9**

Amakhosi hold the record for the longest **unbeaten run** in the PSL. The sequence includes eight wins in a row.

**11**

The number of **clean sheets** kept by SuperSport United's Ronwen Williams, making him the safest keeper in the league this season.

**8**

The number of **assists** Kaizer Chiefs' Lebogang Manyama has this season, making him the top playmaker.

**80 808**

The **highest attendance** at a match came when Kaizer Chiefs beat arch-rivals Orlando Pirates 3-2 at the FNB Stadium in November 2019.

**546**

The total **number of players** across the league's 16 teams.

The total number of **matches played** before the Premiership was suspended due to the coronavirus pandemic.

**186**

**27.4**

The **average age** of footballers playing in the South African top flight.

**6**

The number of **yellow cards** Golden Arrows forward Ntsako Makhubela has received, the most in the PSL.

## HAT-TRICK HEROES



**CHARLTON MASHUMBA**  
(Polokwane City)



**SAMIR NURKOVIC**  
(Kaizer Chiefs)



**GABADINHO MHANGO**  
(Orlando Pirates)

**W**hen Rhulani Mokwena was elevated from his role as assistant coach and handed the reins of Premier Soccer League giants Orlando Pirates in August last year, there was no doubting his status as a rising star of the local coaching scene.

He was lauded as a tactical genius, a student of the game who spent hours and hours reading up on the latest trends in the sport in order to form a philosophy of a modern coach. None of that changed during his time in the Buccaneers hot seat but the harsh realities of being a tactician in the PSL meant his tenure lasted 15 matches, during which time he won only four games.

There is a lot more than theory that goes into coaching – how you interact with players, the culture that develops in the squad and dealing with issues away

# Biggest Challenge Yet

Rhulani Mokwena has been given another chance to show his ability as a head coach after his appointment by Chippa United. By **Nick Said**

# MOKWENA'S MOVE TO THE LESS PRESSURISED ENVIRONMENT OF CHIPPA UNITED LOOKS TO BE THE RIGHT ONE FOR HIS CAREER DEVELOPMENT

## A FAMOUS FOOTBALL FAMILY

Mokwena is from South African football 'royalty' as the grandson of Orlando Pirates legend Eric 'Scara' Sono, who tragically died in a car accident while at his peak in 1964. He is the nephew of one of the country's most heralded players, Jomo Sono, while his father Julius also played for Pirates in the 1970s and '80s.

from the pitch are all equally important. Those skills are hard to teach and can only be perfected through experience, which is why Mokwena's move to the less pressurised environment of Chippa United looks to be the right one for his career.

Coaches at Chippa are always under pressure to a degree and even winning matches is no guarantee of job security. However, Mokwena will be away from the daily scrutiny of the newspapers and social media that comes with being the man in charge of Pirates, which seemed to leave him permanently on edge while leading the Soweto giants.

Mokwena realises the environment on the south coast – away from all the clickbait headlines and constant questions regarding his decision-making of everything

4

Mokwena is the fourth change to the Chilli Boys dugout this season



from team selection to training methods – might be just what he needs.

'I took my time and I made the right decision to come to Chippa,' he says. 'There were other offers but I was waiting for the right project, a short-term situation to try to help a team.

'I'm not even thinking about the long term. I want to focus on the short term and for me, at this moment in time, it is to help the club remain in the PSL. The other things we will see after the season.'

Counting in Mokwena's favour is a solid squad with good players at his disposal. Chippa are underachieving this season, sitting just three points above the relegation zone and he started on a positive note with a 0-0 draw away at Bidvest Wits before the

pause in the season due to the coronavirus pandemic. He must now formulate a plan to get the best out of his squad in a short period of time, which plays to his strengths.

'I think the main objective is to have a clear idea of how you want your team to play. In a pragmatic way, it's also influenced by the culture of the club and the quality of the players that you have,' he says.

'Once you've established that, you then set your clear objectives – playing principles, sub-principles – within that. I'm one of the coaches who believes a lot in possession. I still also believe that a team has to be adaptable to different variables.

'We have a framework or ideology, but we are still adaptable to different scenarios, guided by clear principles and ideas.' ■

# Just Getting Started

Manchester United forward Marcus Rashford shares his story so far and tells of what is still to come

**L**ess than four years after his first appearance, Rashford's 200th game for Manchester United came against Norwich City in January. He marked the occasion with his 63rd and 64th goals for the club. Four days earlier, he had captained the Red Devils for the first time, in their League Cup semi-final first leg at home to Manchester City.

'It has all happened so fast – I didn't know it was coming that close round the corner,' he admits. 'The manager told me before the game – I wasn't expecting it, and it was another one of those moments where you just feel proud going out



on to the pitch. Wearing the armband is something I'll hold with me forever. Hopefully I can put it on a few more times in the future.'

Rashford has achieved so much in his career already, yet he still has plenty of ambition for the decade ahead. 'I know I can do more than I've shown, even this season,' he tells *FourFourTwo*. 'But it's not about rushing things. You have to understand that it will happen when it happens. When the timing's right, everything will click together. Just believe in that process and believe in yourself.'

'If you look at when you play your best football, it's probably around the age of 26. That's when you feel you can be the most complete player. You're learning every day.'

And, at 26, how many goals does he want to be scoring a season?

'As many as I can,' he says. 'It's more about the team. Whether you score 20 goals or 30, it's trophies that count.'

Rashford got a taste for silverware early on in his career and he is fiercely determined to win more. Even his memories of the dramatic Champions League triumph at PSG were followed up with a telling footnote. 'But we didn't go on to win the competition or reach the final,' he says. 'So, in my mind, it doesn't stand for anything.'

'Everyone wants to win trophies. As long as the team is successful and we get back to winning titles and trophies, that's the main thing for me.'

That must include fighting for the Premier League title, then? 'One hundred per cent. That's something we all share, every Man United fan; to get those moments back.'

When asked to describe his ultimate dream for the decade ahead, Rashford reveals he is thinking big. 'To win the World Cup and for Man United to win the Champions League.'

He sampled what the latter experience might be like when he watched idol Cristiano Ronaldo lift the trophy with Real Madrid in Cardiff three years ago.

'We need to start showing signs that we can be the United of old. Football has changed a lot, so it's not going to be exactly the same but we know the

## MOVING ON UP

League season	Games (subs)	Goals
2019-2020	22 (0)	14
2018-2019	33 (7)	10
2017-2018	35 (18)	7
2016-2017	32 (16)	5
2015-2016	11 (0)	5

club can do it. It's been difficult, but it's a period of transition. As long as we stay focused, I don't see why we can't turn things around and really improve.'

Whether or not Rashford wins the Champions League, he has the potential to become a club legend in the years ahead.

'That's always the aim,' he insists. 'You grow up around so many people who have that United legend status that it becomes part of your dream. When you dream of playing for Man United, you don't only dream of making your debut; you also dream of being like Beckham, Scholes and Giggs. It's part of the dream as an academy lad.'

Wayne Rooney was no academy graduate but Rashford dreamed of

being like him, too. The 22-year-old has a long road ahead to get anywhere near his former teammate's United record of 253 goals but, while 20 per year for the next decade is clearly a monumental task, it's not impossible for someone of Rashford's ability.

'I don't know,' he says, smiling. 'I don't pay too much attention to that. If you're playing your best football, then whatever happens, happens. If I were to get that record but we went into the next decade

**'EVERYTHING HAPPENED SO FAST WITH THE NATIONAL TEAM — THERE WAS A TOURNAMENT STRAIGHT AWAY AND, BEFORE I KNEW IT, I WAS ON 10 CAPS. IT HAS JUST KEPT GOING.'**

with no trophies, it wouldn't be the greatest feeling for me. If I don't get the record but we get lots of trophies and something to look back on, that's the most important thing.'

It's the same thinking at international level. He has 13 months to make 12 appearances and become the youngest player to pick up 50 England caps — another Rooney record. This is news to Rashford.

'People say all these things to me but it's not something I'd know leading up to it,' he says. 'But now I do know. Everything has happened so fast with the national team — there was a tournament straight away and before I knew it I was on 10 caps. It has just kept going.'

It's a career that has already delivered plenty of special moments, in only four years as a first-team player. Marcus Rashford believed he could, so he did.

And, in the decade to come, he has plenty more dreams he wants to turn into reality. ■



# Uncertainty in the Air



*SoccerClub* looks at the reaction to the coronavirus pandemic in South Africa. By **Mazola Molefe**

It took a little longer than many would have liked but PSL chairman Irvin Khoza's confirmation that football in South Africa would join in the shutdown helped save lives.

With the economy at risk of collapse and clubs fearing the bankruptcy of the multibillion rand Premiership, the reaction to the suspension of play was mixed.

At first, clubs continued to train while Khoza set up a task team to report back on whether it was possible to finish the season and keep commercial partners happy by playing behind closed doors. But when South African President Cyril Ramaphosa delivered another update a week later by ordering a three-week nationwide lockdown, the penny dropped.

Despite clubs not having to spend money on travel, accommodation and match bonuses, and the league guaranteeing it would not freeze the R2-million monthly grant, AmaZulu informed staff and players that they'd be cutting salaries.

SUPPLIED/SYDNEY MAHLANGUMUZI NTOMBELA/BACKPAGEPIX

'We have not been given any direction by the PSL regarding the reopening of the season. The impact of Covid-19 has severely affect us,' general manager Lunga Sokhela (*below*) told employees on 20 April. 'The company cannot pay salaries in full. Every effort has been made to avoid this but unfortunately they have not yielded positive results.'

Thankfully, towards the end of April, no other top-flight club had followed suit with such drastic measures, but many were feeling the financial pinch caused by the effects of a virus that has threatened the livelihood of men and women in sports across the globe.

'We are lucky that gate receipts are not a large part of our income; we are more reliant on our grant and sponsorship money,' said SuperSport United CEO Stan Matthews (*right*).

'We are not in crisis mode yet, but we can see the economy has been hurt. Our players have been told upfront that their contracts are in place for the remainder of the season, whether the games are played or not. Our budgets run to July, so we don't anticipate any grant cuts at this stage.'

But at Maritzburg United, a club that is the exception in the PSL in terms of pulling crowds to the Harry Gwala Stadium, the reality was slowly sinking in.

'This whole setback will cost a lot of clubs a great deal of money. The problem is the league has obligations that they have to honour to sponsors and then for us it's about plans – contracts and whatever else,' chairman Farook Kadodia (*next page*) said.

'There is a feeling of uncertainty of when will we restart and, if we do, will we have a break? Many of our staff and players are uncertain about their futures. They don't

**'WE ARE NOT IN CRISIS MODE YET, BUT WE CAN SEE THE ECONOMY HAS BEEN HURT' — STAN MATTHEWS**



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## SOWETO GIANTS UNITE

The country's two biggest clubs, Kaizer Chiefs and Orlando Pirates, along with broadcaster MultiChoice, came together in the fight against coronavirus. The clubs handed over 100 000 N95 masks and 350 000 surgical masks, of which 75 000 will go to the police and 75 000 to the South African Defence Force. They also donated 100 000 gloves, 10 000 protective overalls, 10 000 wipes and 100 000 shoe covers to help protect essential service workers.





know whether they will have a job and we cannot commit to contracts until we know exactly what is the way forward.'

In the midst of all the doubts and fear, players forged ahead with their fitness programmes at home. Andile Jali, Ramahlwe Mphahlele, Aubrey Ngoma, Daniel Cardoso, Ronwen Williams and many others used social media to show they were not just putting their feet up on the couch and playing Fifa all day.

'From a mental and chemistry point of view, this is important because football is about having that team spirit and teamwork,' said Steve Komphela, the Golden Arrows coach. 'You can't build the camaraderie when you are isolated. From a technical point of view, there is very little we can do. But what you can do is more about physical and mental training.' ■

## SHABBA CALLS FOR RESPECT



Former Bafana Bafana and Kaizer Chiefs star Siphile Tshabalala called on the public to stay at home.

'We are going through challenging times with the Covid-19 pandemic. Our government has been working tirelessly from the start. Our health and safety is their

number one priority. Let us respect the regulations. Coronavirus is dangerous, let's stay home, wash our hands regularly with clean soap for at least 20 seconds and respect social distancing. I am staying home and I am challenging you to do the same.'

SUPPLIED/SAMUEL SHIWAMBU/BACKPAGEPIX

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**How did you first get signed up by Chelsea?**

They saw me when I was playing in a tournament for team called KPR. I scored a few free kicks.

**Who was your idol growing up?**

Didier Drogba – I was a striker when I was young, and all I wanted to do was score goals. As I grew up, I wasn't really doing it in that position any more, so I moved into central midfield. I spent a few years there, then found myself at right back. Playing in an attacking position when I was younger helped as I dropped further back.



# True Blue

Chelsea defender Reece James has enjoyed a breakout season ... not bad for a player who joined the club as a six-year-old



**What did you make of Frank Lampard being appointed manager?**

I admired Lampard and all the main leaders of the team when I was a kid. He would score a brilliant every other game. When I heard he was the manager, it was great – he's a Chelsea legend. He wanted to sign me for Derby last January but it didn't go through – I was happy playing at Wigan. It was good to know he rated me, although that was at Championship level and when you get a big job at a Premier League team, sometimes minds can change. But when he arrived, he said he wanted to give me a chance. I was injured and he told me to come back in good shape. I'm thankful I'm able to work with him.

**The newspapers linked you with a £15-million move to Manchester United after your loan at Wigan. Was it flattering to hear a valuation like that?**

It's nice when you hear people talking about you and how well you're doing. I don't ever take too much notice of speculation, though.

**How determined were you to make the breakthrough at your boyhood club?**

I thought, if there was a season I was going to do it, this was it. I knew Frank played young players, so I figured if I could get fit I'd get opportunities. My debut was at home to Grimsby in the League Cup – to score and get an assist was a dream come true.





**Joe Cole has compared your crossing to David Beckham ...**

*[Smiles]* It's great to hear what people think of my crossing but David Beckham did it at the top for several years.

**After the Grimsby game, you started playing regularly in the Premier League and featured in the Champions League.**

The highlight was my goal against Ajax in the Champions League. I started the game on the bench and you think, 'I might not come on at all.' But we were losing and then I got told I was coming on at half-time so I made the most of the opportunity.

**You're in the first team with several of your friends from the Chelsea academy. What's that like?**

Great. I came through the academy with a few of them – Callum Hudson-Odoi, Tammy Abraham, Mason Mount and Fikayo Tomori – it's brilliant playing with them in the first team. I know them all as characters, I know how they play. We didn't really talk about the possibility of this happening when we were young, as you feel so close but so far away. You just play in the moment – you don't want to think too far ahead. But you can ask any of them – we're all happy and thankful that we got the chance together.

**You've also signed a new contract ...**

It's great. It's always been my dream to play for Chelsea, so a five-year deal secures me here for a long period of time.

**Do you think you can become one of the best full backs in England?**

Why not? With my potential and my ability, I think I can get there.

**Right back is probably the most competitive spot in the England set-up ...**

Yeah, there are four or five world-class right backs in the England group right now. I'm confident of competing and can't wait to prove myself. ■

# Big Time

The first division has produced a number of stars over the years and *SoccerClub* picks five who have gone on to shine in the PSL. By Peter Raath

## LERATO LAMOLA

It may surprise some but Lerato Lamola first made an impression in the NFD some seven seasons ago by scoring eight goals in 12 starts for the now defunct Roses United. Now a proven PSL player, the fiery sharpshooter joined Lamontville Golden Arrows in the 2016-17 season but he'd already netted a further 21 times for Bloemfontein Celtic, including a brace against University of Pretoria.

Interestingly, at all three outfits the speedy forward with a Bafana cap to his name, featured under head coach Clinton Larsen. At 33, having started his career unusually late, Lamola has played close to 200 top-flight matches and isn't close to considering his retirement yet.



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### RUSHINE DE REUCK

While Maritzburg United's defender-cum-midfielder Rushine de Reuck has all the hallmarks of becoming a national team player, the 24-year-old struggled to make an impact at Milano United under veteran coach Boebie Solomons. In fact, in 2016-17 he was even dropped to Eezy my Kinnes' ABC Motsepe League side, despite being highly recommended by Solomons' assistant Dougie Williams. The club's then academy head, Brandon Truter, saw his vast potential, so it comes as no surprise that De Reuck has picked up a number of PSL Man of the Match awards while starring for the Team of Choice, amid reports linking him to big guns Orlando Pirates and Sundowns.

### RICARDO WILLIAMS

A former NFD stalwart with Milano United and Cape Town All Stars, Ricardo Williams credits mentor Brandon 'Brakkies' Truter for his progress with Highlands Park in the PSL. The left-sided wing back, once the youngest player to get a professional contract with Milano, aged 18, originally picked up tips from the legendary Nasief Morris and wanted to be like another ex-teammate, Ruzaigh Gamildien. Fast forward five years, the Manenberg-born crowd-pleaser is enjoying his career at the Lions of the North after making his debut in 2018-19.



### THEMBINKOSI LORCH

When Thembinkosi Lorch sat on the bench for Maluti FET College as the Free State third-tier outfit made history by knocking Orlando Pirates out of the 2013 Nedbank Cup, the talented teenager had no idea he'd be snapped up by the Buccaneers two years later. But after steady progress in the lower leagues and helping to promote Maluti, that's what happened. The zig-zagging wing also spent time on loan to Cape Town All Stars before being crowned PSL Footballer of the Season as well as Players' Player of the Season in the 2018-19 campaign. Lorch's contribution of nine goals and five assists in 26 league appearances showed his class.



### LUVUYO MEMELA

A late bloomer, Luvuyo Memela didn't have things his own way as a youngster but has certainly shown beyond doubt he's one of the best attacking midfielders in the PSL. After the disappointment of being released by Ajax Cape Town in the 2009-10 season without a single first-team game to his name, coupled with Hanover Park's relegation from the NFD, he showed real potential by bagging eight goals in six matches for Igugu Lekapa during the 2014-15 campaign, which prompted Orlando Pirates' interest. Significantly, since then, the humble, hard-working pro has risen to the occasion, contributing numerous goals and assists, most recently involving the league's top striker Gabadinho Mhango. ■

# The **New** Lion

Spurred on by the success of Percy Tau, Mamelodi Sundowns midfielder Sphelele Mkhulise is aiming to tread the same path. By **Mogamad Allie**

It now seems a distant memory when Percy Tau was sent out on loan to National First Division side Witbank Spurs in 2015 before returning the following season to help Mamelodi Sundowns claim the Caf Champions League and Premiership titles. A Bafana call-up followed shortly afterwards and it wasn't long before the skilful winger was signed by English Premier League side Brighton.

Sphelele Mkhulise, the latest delivery off Masandawana's impressive academy conveyor belt, is hoping the loan spells with Black Leopards and Richards Bay will have a similar impact on his career.

'Going out on loan helped me a lot as it made me grow as a player and as a person,' he told *KickOff*.

'Even Percy Tau was sent away on loan and came back a better player. He became a regular in the first team and right now he's one of the best players in the country.'

The 24-year-old former Maritzburg United junior now has his sights set on emulating the 2018 PSL Footballer of the Season, who has been nicknamed "The Lion" at his Belgian side Club Brugge, where he is on loan from Brighton.

'Going on loan worked well for me. I'm obviously working really hard. I would like to follow in the footsteps of Percy Tau.'

A slow start to his career with Sundowns involved just one league appearance as a second-half substitute against Kaizer Chiefs and five more in cup competitions last season. The attacking midfielder has seen more action during the current campaign.

**'GOING ON LOAN WORKED WELL FOR ME. I WOULD LIKE TO FOLLOW IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF PERCY TAU'**





GAVIN BARKER/SAMUEL SHIWAMBUBACKPAGEPIX

By the time the season was suspended in mid-March because of the Covid-19 pandemic, Mkhulise had made nine starts and four appearances off the bench in Sundowns' 21 league games. His form also won him a starting place in the team for December's Telkom Knockout final against Maritzburg United ahead of Bafana international Sibusiso Vilakazi.

'He reminds me of how Percy came up. And you know I'm a conservative coach, I just want more surety,' Pitso Mosimane said after Mkhulise completed the scoring in the 3-0 win over Angola's Petro Atletico in their Caf Champions League group game.

## BY THE NUMBERS

### PSL

**13 APPEARANCES**

**1 GOAL**

**1 ASSIST**

### CAF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

**4 APPEARANCES**

**2 GOALS**

**1 ASSIST**

### CUP COMPETITIONS

**6 APPEARANCES**

**0 GOALS**

**0 ASSISTS**

'But you've got to understand, last year he was competing with Lebo Maboe, who was top scorer, Gaston Sirino and 'Mshishi' [Temba Zwane]. There was not an easy space. Anthony Laffor was part of the programme. So it's the time now.

'He's a good player. He can lose the ball a bit sometimes. He's happy. You can see he's young, fearless and enjoys himself.'

David Notoane, Mkhulise's coach at the Sundowns academy, agrees with Mosimane that the young midfielder needs to be more careful about retaining the ball.

'Losing possession stems from him being used to running with the ball in the reserve side where he hardly ever lost it. It's different in the PSL which has better quality players and it's something he has to adapt to,' he tells *SoccerClub*.

Notoane, who doubles as national U23 coach, believes Mkhulise has the talent to play for Bafana in the next two years if he continues his current rate of progress.

'He has unbelievable game intelligence and is able to see things on the pitch way before other players. He has great talent and dribbling skills that allow him to go past opponents easily. He reminds me a lot of Thulani Serero.

'He's a soft-spoken individual so he would need to become more assertive if he is going to realise his potential. But I foresee a bright future for him.' ■

# *Cash* Crisis

Manchester City and Uefa are locked in a battle which neither side can afford to lose. By **Richard Buxton**



MARC ATKINS/ARTUR WIDAK/MARTIN RICKETT/SHAUN BOTTERILL/GETTY IMAGES/GALLO IMAGES

**S**hockwaves reverberated around the footballing world in February when it was announced Manchester City would be fined £25.2-million and banned from European competitions for the next two seasons for breaching Financial Fair Play (FFP) rules.

City stand charged of overstating commercial revenues between 2012 and 2016, with owner Sheikh Mansour (*below*) accused of heavily subsidising deals signed with Abu Dhabi-based companies. This comes four and a half years after they were reprimanded for posting losses of £149m in 2012 and 2013, which far exceeded FFP's limit of £37m over a two-year period.

Manchester City have appealed to the Court of Arbitration, and Simon Cliff, City's chief legal adviser, reportedly informed colleagues that club chairman Khaldoon Al-Mubarak 'would rather spend £30-million on the 50 best lawyers in the world to sue Uefa for the next 10 years'. That abrasive stance has been a recurring theme in the ongoing wrangles because, according to Cliff's purported logic, 'Uefa doesn't respond to anything other than aggression'.



Added to the combative approach were public pronouncements by Yves Leterme, a former Belgian prime minister and the lead investigator of Uefa's Club Financial Control Body, that they should be hit with an automatic European ban if the charges against them are proved. City believe that Leterme had overseen a 'hostile process' and sought to halt the FFP probe with an unsuccessful legal challenge at the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS). They also attempted to seek damages from Uefa for its 'unlawful' leaking of information to the media. Findings reported by German newspaper *Der Spiegel* in late 2018 were claimed to be inadmissible in the latest investigation due to being illegally obtained by the website Football Leaks, whose owner, Rui Pinto, faces a host of separate charges, including computer hacking.

UEFA's role as arbiters of European club football had long been viewed with



## COSTLY EXERCISE

City's pursuit of trophies has seen them spend £1.5-billion on 278 players since the start of the 2009-10 season. The balance sheet doesn't look healthy with only £452-million brought in from player sales, leaving them with a negative balance of £1.185-billion

suspicion at the Etihad. Their laissez-faire attitude towards racism was a constant bone of contention, not least when City routinely found themselves on the receiving end of questionable double standards. A fine for arriving one minute late to the second half of their Europa League tie with Sporting Lisbon in 2012 was about £8 000 more costly than the punishment handed out to Porto after their fans had racially abused City players Mario Balotelli and Yaya Toure in the previous round.

Supporters in the blue half of Manchester do not suffer fools or forget easily and are quick to drown out the Champions League's anthem whenever it is played. If Uefa has its way, they will not be hearing it until at least the 2022-23 season. Yet the organisation is on a run of three straight defeats when clubs found guilty of FFP breaches have

**9**

The number of first team players that cost **Manchester City £50-million or more**, including: Kevin de Bruyne, Rodri, Riyad Mahrez, Joao Cancelo, Aymeric Laporte, Raheem Sterling, Benjamin Mendy, John Stones and Kyle Walker

taken their appeal to CAS. Only AC Milan agreed to a compromise by voluntarily excluding themselves for one Europa League campaign to avoid further account scrutiny.

City's determination to fight their two-year sanction means any hopes of a similar ceasefire between the warring factions is highly unlikely, leaving three

likely scenarios on the table. If CAS find in Uefa's favour, the European competition ban imposed on the club will be enforced. Should their suspension be reduced to 12 months, the Premier League's fifth-placed team at the end of the 2019-20 season would assume City's place in the Champions League. In the event that Pep Guardiola's side win their appeal, it will become a landmark ruling.

Financial experts believe an overturned ruling has the potential to bring down FFP's house of cards. A hiatus from the Champions League, similarly, risks unravelling City's best-laid plans with losses of £100-million per season and the threat of some elite players seeking pastures new.

Everything is on the line for both parties. If another European football powerhouse triumphs over its governing body, just as Galatasaray, Paris Saint-Germain and Milan did before them, the game's continental landscape will finally belong to the clubs rather than its administrators. ■

## **FINANCIAL EXPERTS BELIEVE AN OVERTURNED RULING HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BRING DOWN FFP'S HOUSE OF CARDS**



MICHAEL REGAN/GETTY IMAGES/GALLO IMAGES

# PLAYER QUIZ



## DIEGO FRANCO

Stellenbosch FC midfielder

### ALL-TIME BAFANA BAFANA PLAYER



#### SIPHIWE TSHABALALA

He is a good all-round player and scored that screamer against Mexico at the 2010 Fifa World Cup, which is impossible to forget.

### STADIUM

It has to be Cape Town Stadium, with its incredible history. When you enter the venue, you can breathe in football.

### PLAYER YOU CAN LEARN FROM

Defender Robyn Johannes is very intelligent on and off the ball. He has a wonderful ability to pass between the lines, which helps create attacking options from the back.

### BOOTS

#### NIKE MAGISTA



### MOST MEMORABLE CAREER MOMENTS

My highlights relate back to the time I was playing in the Mexican First Division, where I won a few titles. Playing in Costa Rica and Spain also stand out.

### WAYS TO RELAX

Like most players, I like to spend my time with my family and friends.

### HOLIDAY DESTINATION

Cancun is my favourite place and Amsterdam is a close second.

### BEST YOUNG PSL PLAYER



I really like Vincent Pule, who plays for Orlando Pirates. He's already achieved a lot in the game.

### BEST SENIOR PSL PLAYER



Gaston Sirino is one of the most intelligent players in the league and often makes a difference.



### FOOD

My favourite is Mexican – give me tacos, enchiladas, pozole or micheladas. I love it all.

# AS IT STANDS

## PREMIERSHIP TABLE AT THE BREAK

Pos	Team	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1	Kaizer Chiefs	22	15	3	4	23	48
2	Mamelodi Sundowns	21	13	5	3	15	44
3	SuperSport United	24	11	7	6	13	40
4	Orlando Pirates	23	11	7	5	9	40
5	Maritzburg United	24	10	9	5	6	39
6	Bidvest Wits	21	11	5	5	8	38
7	Golden Arrows	23	8	8	7	-5	32
8	Highlands Park	24	8	7	9	-5	31
9	Bloemfontein Celtic	23	7	7	9	0	28
10	Cape Town City	23	6	9	8	-2	27
11	Stellenbosch	24	7	6	11	-9	27
12	Chippa United	24	6	8	10	-8	26
13	Baroka	24	6	5	13	-6	23
14	Polokwane City	24	7	2	15	-11	23
15	AmaZulu	24	6	5	13	-13	23
16	Black Leopards	24	5	5	14	-15	20

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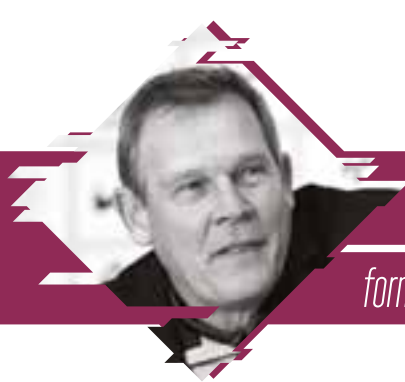


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# Pandemic Problems



**NEIL TOVEY**

*former Bafana Bafana captain*

The Covid-19 pandemic has serious implications for the world of football from a financial and logistical point of view. From Safa's standpoint, we don't know when we are going to start again but the goal is to finish the league season before international football can take over.

South Africa were due to play their Afcon qualifiers from September against Sao Tome, Ghana and Sudan but, with travel bans in place, it's tough to find a solution. It's not my decision whether Bafana Bafana

## IT'S A PARTICULARLY CHALLENGING TIME FOR THE PLAYERS WHO ARE UNABLE TO TRAIN WITH THEIR TEAMMATES

play again this year, and the priority is to get the league season finished.

It's a particularly challenging time for the players who are unable to train with their teammates. However, teams are professional and players have been given individual programmes to enable them to stay fit. When the PSL gets the green light to resume, I don't think players will need a pre-season period of six weeks to prepare. I think we will probably be looking at two to three weeks before fixtures resume.

The English Premier League is rumoured to be exploring the possibility of completing their season with 'World Cup-style' camps in June and up to five matches per day. I believe we could tweak that model to complete the PSL season. Teams could play as often as three times a week, which would be manageable. However, in the beginning I don't foresee as many fixtures

taking place because they need to get back into playing for at least a week or two.

The players may be in lockdown but from an exercise and training perspective they are doing more than they would during the off-season. Aside from the physical side of the game, the mental aspect is equally as important and some players will cope better than others.

Some will be disciplined in lockdown and others will become demotivated and not do what they are supposed to. It is going to be interesting to see how squads perform when the action returns. ■

*Tovey, a stalwart for Amakhosi and Bafana Bafana over an illustrious playing career, captained his country to Afcon glory in 1996. He serves as Safa's technical director, a position he's held since 2015.*



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