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Too many ants telling bees how to make honey at Sihlangu

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LONG-STANDING MARRIAGE:

Dixies pumps in E40 000 sponsorship to MRPA Pool League

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Sibusiso Nyawo

Marketing Executive



marketing@rubiconmedia.group



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RUBICON Sports Gazette

FEBRUARY 23-29, 2024



TOO MANY ANTS TELLING BEES HOW TO MAKE HONEY AT SIHLANGU!



The fact that Sihlangu Semnikati is among the eight lowest ranked nations in the continent is a sobering reality that we have hit rock bottom. We cannot get below where we are right now. It calls upon government, the Eswatini Football Association (EFA) and all stakeholders to roll up their sleeves to rescue the country's most followed sport.

If ever you needed something to remind you just how far behind

we are as a football country, look no further than the Africa Cup of Nations 2025 preliminary round fixtures. We are in good company with the likes of Somalia, Chad, South Sudan, Mauritius, Liberia, Djibouti and Sao Tome. Pardon me, some of the names of these countries sound like contestants of the Big Brother Mzansi which premiered on January 21, 2024, on DStv Channel 198. Some of these countries have spent years fighting civil wars, ravaged by poverty, with no structured domestic leagues and joined both CAF and FIFA much later than us. But here we are today, 55 years after Independence and having joined CAF, we are in the same pot as Sao Tome, Djibouti, South Sudan, pedestrian performers who only add numbers in CAF competitions. Besides having given birth to the only African

player to ever win the FIFA World Player of the Year, George Weah, who also became the country's president from 2018 to 2023, Liberia is renowned for having had one of the longest, ruinous civil war in the continent. What about Chad? One of the poorest countries in the continent with over five million people who are food insecure in one of the world's most ethnically and linguistically diverse countries. With 42 per cent of the population living below the poverty line, it is unsurprising that we are in the same pool. Somalia? Here is a country that has endured a long and brutal history, with a never-ending war, random attacks and famine. Then you have the tourists' destinations, Mauritius and Sao Tome.

What does this say about us as Eswatini?

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Eswatini National Football Team aka Sihlangu Semnikati players.

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Potentially good but perennial bloopers on the international stage. We have had our few and far between good moments, winning bronze medal in the COSAFA Cup, beating Togo's Sparrow Hawks at home, coming within whisker of qualifying for AFCON 2008 but we can all agree in the last five years we have been softer-than-a-marshmallow. Under the misguidance of one Dominic Kunene, we have been turned into a laughingstock. Playing home games away from home because our stadiums do not meet CAF/FIFA standards is a national embarrassment that strikes straight at the genesis of our predicament – lack of government will. With a Football Association that is clueless, rudderless, and irrational, we have hit rock bottom. The national team has long ceased to belong to the nation – it is enclave of a few punch-drunk with power individuals who are treating it like their own fiefdom to an extent that they even have a say who gets selected and who gets to be in the starting line-up. That's why it has become a norm that the national team would be parachuted to other countries without the knowledge of anyone to play useless friendly games that add no value to its being. That's why those silk-suited souls at Sigwaca House who don't think beyond the doorsteps of that hideous building

believe they are the Alpha and Omega of everything about the team and football in this country and therefore they are not answerable to anyone.

A month ago, the EFA held its Sihlangu Indaba which to me was surprising that the very same people who have masterminded our downfall got together to try and find solutions on how they have got us swimming in the pool of mediocrity. In the end, it was nothing more than a talk shop. The resolution and recommendations will continue to gather dust-bunnies in the many files at Sigwaca House while we continue to be the whipping boys of the continent. For a whole country that finished the calendar year with only one win – a 2-1 COSAFA win over Namibia – it is truly

surprising why the EFA then suddenly had cold feet when it

came to releasing coach Dominic Kunene from his misery when they effected some cosmetic changes in the technical bench. But then I remembered that next year, it is election year. Sihlangu Semnikati has long been sacrificed on the altar of the EFA presidential elections.

Therein lies the rub.

As long as the national team coaches carry a vote in the EFA General Assembly where they sit as delegates, we might as well forget about Sihlangu ever qualifying for anything. We will continue being in the eight lowest ranked nations in the continent. Botswana and Lesotho have made great strides while we are busy pussyfooting around critical issues and allowing too many ants to tell bees how to make honey.

Until the day we are honest with ourselves, address the pertinent issues and get the basics right, we will continue trying to put square pegs on round holes.

Yes, we will beat Somalia and qualify for the AFCON 2025 Group stages but that will be the end of it as it always been the case. We continue to do one and the same thing and expect a different result.

Albert Einstein has a word for it – INSANITY.

We have hit rock bottom.

Have a safe weekend.

Lwazi Dlamini
Sports Editor



Sihlangu Semnikati coach Dominic Kunene.



Sibusiso Masilela
Sports Reporter

It's an epic one!

The Mbabane Swallows will host second round pacesetters Royal Leopard in a potential title decider billed for the newly constructed Mkhuzweni technical Centre.

The outcome of the match will certainly prove the two side title credentials as both teams are contesting for the 2024/25 MTN Premier League title.

The police side is currently perched second with 32 points with an inferior goal difference over log leaders and rivals Young Buffaloes.

Meanwhile, the 'Beautiful Birds' are fourth with 30 points and



Ayanda Gadlela.

both teams coming from playing stalemates in their previous matches.

The red and white glamour side are fresh from playing a 1-all draw against Nsingizini Hotspurs while 'Ingwe Mabalabala' secured the same result against Mbabane Highlanders.

There is more to play between these sides as they couldn't be separated during the first-round encounter with a 1all draw.

'Umkhonto ka Shaka' is slowly converting the newly constructed venue into their hunting ground as they recently massacred first round pacesetters Madlenya 4-0.

The Caleb Ngwenya men will be without their captain Kwakhe Tfwala who will be serving a one match suspension after he was red carded against Nsingizini Hotspurs.

The master disciplinarian tactician is still without his injured seasoned striking pair of Felix Fela' Badenhorst and Sandile Hlatshwako who are still nursing long term injuries.

While on the opposite dugout, Leopard will be parading an almost full strength ahead of this crunch clash.

Players to watch:

Ayanda Gadlela (Swallows)

The former Tambuti player is enjoying himself in his new target man role since the injuries to Sandile Hlatshwako and Felix

'Fela' Badenhorst. He is maturing in every game, and he is one man whom coach Caleb Ngwenya will rely on upfront against the strong opposition. Gadlela packs powerful shots at goal and good runs that can cause headache for the Edwin Matsebula led charges.

Muzi 'Mzoro' Dlamini (Royal Leopard)

The pint-sized right footed winger is maturing like wine for the police side during the second round. The ex-Sihlangu player has been on form in Leopard's resurgence, and he has scored important goals against two other crowd pullers Manzini Wanderers and M b a b a n e Highlanders respectively in their previous outings. Swallows will have to keep a close eye on 'Mzoro' to ensure that they grind results against t h e revamped ' I n g w e Mabalabala'.



Muzi Dlamini.

RAGING BUFFALOES CHARGE AT STUBBORN NSINGIZINI



Sibusiso Masilela
Sports Reporter

MTN Premier League log leaders Young Buffaloes title credentials will be put to test by the stubborn Nsingizini Hotspurs.

The two sides will lock horns at the KaLanga Technical Centre on Saturday in one of the biggest week 18 fixtures.

The army side are on a rich vein in the league which helped them occupy top spot with 32 points.

‘Amathole Ezinyathi’ will be seeking revenge against the expensively assembled Shiselweni based outfit following their 1-0 win during the first-round encounter.

The courageous Mandla ‘Sitofu’ Dlamini are fresh from a resounding

3-2 win over Limping Moneni Pirates which

helped them leapfrog Leopard in the summit of the log.

Ali Matse.

Meanwhile, the seventh placed Nsingizini secured a hard fought 1-1 draw against Mbabane Swallows at their own backyard King Sobhuza II Memorial Stadium.

The result placed ‘Insingizi yezulu’ at position seven with 25 points.

Buffaloes have picked up form with the duo of Ali Matse and Njabulo Maziya being the chief tormentors for recent opponents including Pirates.

The visitors have been blowing hot and cold this season which has seen them play nine draws in the league despite having quality in their team.

Zimbabwean Coach Alexis Sergion is still trying to find his perfect starting XI since joining the ambitious side two months ago.

Sergion is blessed with enough depth and quality blended with youth and experience such as Pius Baffour, Nyasha Chintuli, Reagan Kangumbi and Thubelihle Mavuso.

The National Under 23 playmaker Mavuso has been the livewire for his team this season scoring some few goals and he will certainly play a crucial role in this crucial encounter.

Players to watch: **Ali Matse (Young Buffaloes)**

The versatile winger has been a mainstay for the army side’s second round resurgence by scoring some vital goals.

The former Manzini Wanderers player has been chief tormentor



for teams with his experience and excellent eye for goal.

Matse has also formed a deadly attacking partnership with Njabulo Maziya and Sandile ‘Saviola’ Gamedze which is likely to cause headache for the opposition’s defence marshalled by Pius Baffour.

Pius Baffour (Nsingizini Hotspurs)

The towering deadlock Ghanaian international will once again lead the team in the last line of defence against the free scoring army side.

Baffour possesses good aerial power and excellent leadership skills.

He is able to read the game well and he will have to make sure he thwarts the opposition deadly striking force led by Sandile ‘Saviola’ Gamedze and Njabulo Maziya.



Pius Baffour.





FOUR TEAMS IN RELEGATION BATTLE

By Sibusiso Masilela
Sports Reporter

The relegation battle is now intensifying with four teams lying in danger of getting the chop at the end of the current MTN Premier League. With nine games remaining before the curtain falls, we take a look on the chances on the four candidates' chances of cheating the dreaded axe ahead of their next three fixtures.

Moneni Pirates

The winless 'Sea Robbers' have been sailing low this season which has resulted in their current log standings where they are currently rooted at the bottom of the table.

The Gcina Dlamini led side have only collected 10 points in 17 matches which should be a serious concern for the 'Buccaneers' faithful. The black and white ensemble have displayed porous defence in recent matches where they failed to protect what looked comfortable wins against neighbours Manzini Wanderers and Denver Sundowns, which ended up in draws. Pirates needs to start collecting points in

their next three matches where they will face uphill battles against Green Mamba, Nsingizini Hotspurs and Mbabane Swallows.

Next three matches

Green Mamba
Nsingizini Hotspurs
Mbabane Swallows

Ezulwini United

The Mphumelelo 'Mapho' Ngwenya led charges have lost its sting this season as they have failed to grind results in the league. The youthful side has only collected 13 points in 17 matches in the campaign. They need to come with a swift strategy to grind results in their next matches including Sunday relegation battle against fellow strugglers Manzini Wanderers at King Sobhuza II Memorial Stadium. The team will also take title contenders Young Buffaloes and Madlenya in their matches.

Next three matches

Manzini Wanderers
Young Buffaloes
Madlenya

Manzini Wanderers

Things are not so wonderful for the once mighty hub giants for the second consecutive season. The most followed team in the land is on the brink of facing the worst

scenario in their history since its formation in 1957 which is relegation. The hub giants are not safe from the drop zone with 13 points after 17 matches and they have already showed some positive signs. This includes the 1-0 win over defending champions Green Mamba and a 1all draw against fellow crowd pullers Mbabane Highlanders.

The 'Weslians' will have to come to the party in their next three matches against Ezulwini United, Mbabane Swallows and Rangers in their three matches.

Next three matches

Ezulwini United
Mbabane Swallows
Rangers

Denver Sundowns

The 'Kappa boys' are not safe from danger as they are currently occupying an unsafe position 12 which should worry their well-travelled mentor, Milton Dlamini.

Sundowns must grind results in their next three matches Rangers and two title contenders Royal Leopard and Young Buffaloes

Next three matches:

Rangers
Royal Leopard

Y o u n g
Buffaloes



2023/24 Dixie's International E40 000 league champions Manzini pool club lifting their trophy during the recent prize presentation held at Manzini club.



DIXIE'S PUMPS ANOTHER E40K FOR MRPA POOL LEAGUE

Sibusiso Masilela
Sports Reporter

It's a long-standing marriage.

The partnership between Dixie's International and Manzini Regional Pool Association continues to grow leaps and bounds.

This follows the Matsapha based company's decision to pump in another E40 000 sponsorship for the 2024 / 2025 season.

Dixie's Marketing Manager Phila Mahlindza said they were happy with their partnership with the regional association in a presentation recently held at Manzini club.

"We are pleased with our standing partnership with MRPA hence we have decided to support the league with E40 000," he said.

Receiving the sponsorship, was Eswatini Cue Sports Association (ECSA) President Muntu Dlamini, appreciated the sponsor for its continued support to their

affiliate.

Dixie's have been sponsoring MRPA for the past five years with the same amount. The recent presentation saw Manzini pool club take home E9 500 first prize money after winning the 2023/24 title. The hub outfit were the biggest earners for the past season after they raked in E11 000 for winning the league and E15 00 for finishing third in the knockout tournament. Police side REPS took home E9 400 after finishing second in the league (5 500) and won the knockout tournament's E 4 000 first prize money.

The full 2023 /24 top four league prize breakdown

1. Manzini pool club- E9 500
2. REPS - E5 500
3. Stairs - E3 500
4. Ludzeludze 1 - E2 500

Knockout tournament

1. REPS - E4 000
2. Stairs - E3 000
3. Manzini pool club - E1 500
4. Garrison- E1 500

MRPA set to replace former Chairman

The Manzini Regional Pool Association (MRPA) will finally replace their former Chairman Menzi Bhembe on March 9.

This will be during the association's annual general meeting set to take place at a venue still to be confirmed.

Bhembe was recently co-opted into the Eswatini Cue Sports Association executive committee where he assumed the Treasurer position where he will replace Fana Gama. MRPA Secretary Musa Dlamini confirmed the news.

"We will be having our special elections on March 9, and we will soon open nominations for the Chairman position. We urge teams to attend the AGM in numbers since we will be discussing important matters on the day," he said.

The Secretary further urged new teams to contact him on 76263690 for registration.

TWO-DAY CAMP FOR AFRICAN GAMES SQUAD

Sibusiso Masilela
Sports Reporter

The Eswatini Olympic and Commonwealth Games Association (EOCGA) has lined up a two-day camp for the 2024 Africa Games team.

The camp will be staged between March 1 -2 at Mhlume country club in preparations for the continent's showpiece in Ghana. The 13-member team is currently preparing for the quadrennial international assignment between March 8-13 in March at Accra.

EOCGA Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Maxwell Jele confirmed the news when giving updates on the squad.

"The team will have a two-day camp where they will get to know each other ahead of the international assignment. We will announce other details in due course," he said.

The team will be funded to the tune of E1.7 million by Eswatini Sports and Recreation Council (E1.1million) and EOCGA (E600 000).

The team will be led by EOCGA board member Zakhele Zulu who is the chef de mission and Zama Tsabedze (squad Manager) during the assignment.

Two athletes Sibusiso 'Swazibolt' Matsenjwa and Bongiwe Mahlalela recently secured podium finishes during the 2024 Akane Simbine Classic



Bongiwe Mahlalela.



Saneliso Masuku.

Shootout competition held over the weekend at the Pilditch Stadium. Other athletes such as the Taekwondo duo of Wandile Maziya and Carllota Munave are fresh from attending the 2024 Olympic qualifiers in Senegal.

Meanwhile, top Boxer Thabiso Dlamini is currently out of the country attending a one-month camp in Gqeberha ahead of the continent spectacle.

The full team Eswatini

Athletics

Sibusiso 'Swazi bolt' Matsenjwa
Bongiwe Mahlalela

Coach/ Manager – Thoba Mazibuko

Swimming

Simanga Dlamini

Coach: Welcome Nhlabatsi



Thabiso Dlamini.



Simanga Dlamini.

Boxing

Thabiso Dlamini
Sibongiseni Shongwe
Coach: Muzi Shongwe

Karate

Lwazi Dlamini
Melusi Dlamini
Coach: Victor Gwebu

Taekwondo

Carllotta Munave
Wandile Maziya
Saneliso Masuku
Sivunolesihle Dlamini
Coach: Mancoba Motsa
Nkosinathi Mthembu (poomsae)
Sizwe Mabuza (poomsae)

Chef de mission: Zakhele Zulu

General Manager: Zama Tsabedze

Physiotherapist: Nomvula Dlamini



ANOTHER EXCITING SPORTING WEEKEND SIZZLING PREMIER LEAGUE ACTION

Sibusiso Masilela
Sports Reporter

Another thrilling weekend awaits football lovers in the MTN Premier League.

Fans will be treated to some top-shelf action on Saturday with two exciting clashes at Mkhuzweni Technical Centre and Ka Langa Technical Centre.

This is what to expect from the various sporting codes over the weekend.

Football

Crunch MTN premier League clashes will take Centre stage on Saturday between two title contenders Mbabane Swallows and Royal Leopard at Mkhuzweni Technical centre.

Another exciting match will be staged at Kalanga Technical Centre between current log leaders Young Buffaloes and Nsingizini Hotspurs.

The action will be wrapped up by a relegation battle between Manzini Wanderers and Ezulwini United on Sunday

at King Sobhuza II Stadium.

Cycling

Local cyclists will be back on the road for the first time in 2024 with the Safety and Awareness ride.

The first event for the year will take place at Ezulwini.

The route will go via Matsapha mahala circle and back to the Corner Plaza complex.

Riders will be using this race to create awareness about the sport with road users ahead of the series of domestic competitions.

Several clubs such as 4eva cycling club, Newcomm Wheels, Darkton cycling, MTN Khemani, Kusekhaya, among others under the flagship of the Eswatini Cycling Association (ECA).

Volleyball

The champions for the third Mula Sport series will be crowned on Saturday evening at Mavuso Sports Centre. The proceedings will kick off with the semifinals in the male and female categories.

Some of the teams that will be in action include Correctional

Sunrise, Royal Eswatini Police Service, Scorpions and Bob Cats. The finals will take place later at the same venue.

Golf

The Mbabane club will host their annual two-day club championships on Saturday and Sunday. The tournament will be attended by a field of over 60 golfers. The proceedings will be wrapped up with the prize presentation on Sunday at the same venue. The Nkonyeni golf club will host the United General Holdings Tombstone medal tournament.

The tournament is set to attract over 20 golfers.

Tennis

The Eswatini National Tennis Association (ENTA) will host the second leg of Swaziland Building Society juniors tournament at Mhlume tennis courts. The tournament will have the under 12 and 16 players in the male and female categories.



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