

PENCHANT FOR UNDER- ACHIEVEMENT:

Why Cape Verde has
surpassed Sihlangu
on all fronts

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DEARLY DEPARTED:

Paying tribute to late
Sihlangu defender,
Ndezi Masangane

PAGE 16



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CAPE VERDE'S AFCON EXPLOITS PROVES EVERYTHING RISES, FALLS WITH LEADERSHIP



Cape Verde National Football Team aka Blue Sharks.

The 'Blue Sharks' of Cape Verde qualifying for the quarter-finals of the Africa Cup of Nations 2023 is a true example of how proper leadership, intelligent planning and genuine support from government can be the foundation of success inspite of small nation in size.

Cape Verde, officially known as the Republic of Cabo Verde, is an archipelago and island country of West Africa in the central Atlantic Ocean, consisting of ten volcanic islands with a combined land area of 4 033 square kilometers and a population of slightly around 500 000 people.

Currently ranked as the 10th best country in Africa in its human development index, it became famous in sports for

its basketball team which won a bronze medal in the FIBA Africa Championships in 2007.

When I landed in this beautiful island, (I have never seen so many drop-dead gorgeous women in one place) on November 16, 2003 with the national team, Sihlangu which was minus six players who had been left stuck in Sadio Mane's country, Senegal due to logistical challenges, I was left in awe not just but the warm hospitality we were accorded but the work ethic of the citizens of that island.

Having gained Independence from the Portuguese in 1975, the Cape Verdian Football Federation founded in 1982 only joined FIFA in 1986, CAF in 2000 and played in the AFCON qualifiers for the first time in the 2003. But ten years later, they qualified for the AFCON

finals and again in 2015, 2021 and 2023. While they are yet to qualify for the World Cup, they have won many people's hearts after qualifying for the quarter-finals stage of the biennial continental showpiece in the on-going football jamboree in Ivory Coast where they have set a date with Bafana BaBroos....er Bafana Bafana.

For a country that only gained its Independence from the Portuguese in 1975, Cape Verde has outdone itself.

Cape Verde success story is littered with examples of how proper leadership, government will and intelligence planning when working in concert can defy all the odds. Theirs is the most extraordinary success story for one of the

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Eswatini National Football Team aka Sihlangu Semnikati.

Continued from Page 02 ►

continent's smallest countries.

While most people are fond of saying when you have a lot of players plying their trade in top leagues around the world, it can work wonders for the national team, the reality is that it is not always the case. Otherwise, Ghana's Black Stars, Algeria's Desert Warriors and Morocco's Atlas Lions would not be preparing to watch the quarter-final AFCON matches from the comfy of their homes like the rest of us. South Africa's Bafana Bafana squad is 90 per cent made up of home-based players but

Hugo Broos and his boys are in the quarterfinals of the tournament having beaten a World Cup semi-finalist in Morocco

in the last 16 stage. Yes, in the case of Cape Verde, 95 per cent of the squad is made up of players plying their trade in Europe and Asia and it is working wonders for the team but there is also the element of proper leadership and government-will to their cause.

For years after joining FIFA and CAF they played their games at Estadio da Varzea, located in Praia, the Capital of Santiago but in 2014 they built a new stadium, the Estadio

Nacional de Cape Verde with just a capacity of 15 000.

They have a smaller population than ours – just 500 000 people – a semi-professional domestic league like ours and only joined CAF in 2000 yet they have already qualified for the AFCON finals four times in 2013, 2015, 2021 and 2023.

Cape Verde, along with Algeria, are among African national teams drawing more from their diaspora. For example, it is asserted that there are several times as many people of Cape Verdean descent elsewhere than on the islands. Notably Portugal, the east coast of the United States, France, Luxembourg and in the harbour city of Rotterdam in the Netherlands, where they work on the many ships in the Dutch city.

It was with those destinations in mind that 12 years ago former national coach Alexandre Alhinho began a recruiting process, looking to strength the national team ahead of the 2006 World Cup qualifiers.

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Sihlangu Semnikati Dominic Kunene.

Continued from Page 03 ►

They were then a lowly 129th in the rankings.

He travelled extensively in Europe in the months leading up to start of qualifying in 2004, seeking to persuade players of Cape Verdean origin to join the national team.

Alhinho had his sights set on Olympique Marseille captain Manuel dos Santos, who had helped his club reach the UEFA Cup final against Valencia, but the defender eventually could not be persuaded. However, others like Boavista striker Cafu, who had originally held out hopes of making the Portuguese national side, eventually agreed to play for "Tubaroes Azul" (Blue Sharks) and made a quick and positive impact.

"We have had to negotiate with these players because they don't know our land, our country Cape Verde," explained Alhinho to Mzansi Football in 2004.

"We have had to talk a lot to them but things have been going very good. I just hope that they will be able to make it and come and join us."

Players from Europe began to throw in their lot. For many it was a unique opportunity to feature in a national team and harbour World Cup dreams. Successive coaches like Ricardo a Rocha, Joao de Deus and Lucio Antunes continued the search for Cape Verdean connections worldwide and today's team have largely been born and/or raised in the better facilities and structure of European football, thereby emerging better polished players and elevating the Cape Verde's profile from "tiny island nation" to African football power.



EFA President Peter 'Samora' Simelane.

In 2013 they became the smallest country to ever qualify for the African Nations' Cup finals, their population even less than the 2012 co-hosts Equatorial Guinea.

Today, they stand side-by-side with the top guns of African football, in the last eight stage of the biennial showpiece, facing boisterous Bafana Bafana, who must be squeaking in their boots at the prospect of facing the unpredictable Islanders.

Why can't we be the same?

Therein lies the rub.

If there is no government-will combined with a clueless football leadership obsessed with power, you end up with the cannon-fodder that is our national team, Sihlangu Semnikati. Dead-as-dodo. A lifeless team with a consistent penchant for underachievement.

That is the difference between us and Cape Verde.

We may not have players carrying Eswatini passport plying their trade all over the globe but we can put in place the building blocks with a proper development programme that can help produce

good players which we can do our best to export and expose in the Scandinavian countries, for example, for them to gain the needed experience. But right now, we have people in football leadership who cannot think beyond the doorsteps of Sigwaca House; people who have no vision of where they want to take our football and most astonishingly the self-same people who are fighting tooth and nail to keep their comfy positions even when everybody can see they are out of depth. Come to think of it, in August this year, the Premier League of Eswatini (PLE) will be going to the polls and already we are scratching our heads without an answer of who is capable of leading the organisation. Next year in June, the Eswatini Football Association (EFA) will hold its elective congress and once again, we have no clue who really deserves to correct the wasted five years we have been subjected to by the current inept leadership. Instead, God forbid, one Peter 'Samora' Simelane will be pulling all strings behind the scenes in order to be re-elected. It's a vicious cycle. Then we wonder why countries like Cape Verde have long overtaken us inspite of being members of CAF for 24 years when we have been there for 56 years. Yes, it's true, John Maxwell was not smoking a joint from the green grass of Pigg's Peak when he said: everything rises and falls on leadership.

We are bleeding through the wounds – literally and figuratively.

**Yours in Sports
LWAZI DLAMINI**

'WINNING DERBY IS THE SAME AS WINNING A TROPHY' — FANS

Sibusiso Masilela
Sports Reporter

The Mavuso Sports Centre will be the place to be when limping hub giants Manzini Wanderers take on the revamped Royal Leopard in an epic Week 16 MTN Premier League clash.

This match is set to produce fireworks, as both teams are having different missions heading to the encounter.

The home side will be gunning for maximum points, as they will look to move out of the relegation zone, with the police side aiming a victory to ensure that they consolidate their top spot on the log table.

Wanderers have already produced an upset at the

same venue, where they stunned defending champions Green Mamba, which is something veteran mentor Nyanga 'Crooks' Hlophe will be eyeing in this match.

Hlophe will rely on his workaholic Mlamuli 'Mlaba' Nkhambule to inspire the crowd-pullers, who will combine with the striking pair of Banele 'Banny' Mdluli and Simanga Shongwe.

The crowd-pullers will also be without the services of Majaha Nhlabatsi and Lindelwa Dlodlu, who are not eligible to play against the parent club, Leopard as they are on-loan.

The current log leaders head coach Edwin Matsebula will be pinning his hopes on trusted servants, such as Junior Magagula, Banele Shongwe and Fanelo Tsabedze to do the job inside the field.

The trio has been instrumental in the resurgence of the police side.

'Ingwe Mabalabala' cannot afford a slip, as they are currently at the summit of the log standings.

for the 'Weslians' quest to cheat relegation for the second consecutive season.

He is maturing like wine and he always rise to the occasion during big matches which saw him scores a stunner during their recent 4-0 win over Green Mamba.

Leopard: Junior Magagula

The skillful attacking midfielder has been on fine form for the police side this season and he has played a key role in the resurgent of the police side. He has been banging vital goals that has helped 'Ingwe mabalabala' climb to the top spot in the log standings.

PLAYERS TO WATCH:

Wanderers: Mlamuli 'Mlaba' Nkhambule

The gifted left-footed playmaker remains the main man



Junior Magagula.



Mlamuli 'Mlaba' Nkhambule.

Sibusiso Masilela
Sports Reporter

A potential thriller is on the cards for football fans in the Northern Hhohho region where Mbabane Swallows will host Madlenya FC at the Mkhuzweni Technical Centre.

The 'Beautiful Birds' will be using the newly opened facility for the first time since it was officially commissioned by former minister of sports, culture, and youth affairs Harries 'Madze' Bulunga last year.

'Umkhonto kaShaka' are faced with an uphill battle against the wounded giants-slayers, who are fresh from their second defeat of the season against Royal Leopard.

Swallows head coach Caleb Ngwenya is also faced with a striking force headache, with his two veteran strikers Felix 'Fela' Badenhorst and Sandile Hlatwako both ruled out of the club activities due to injuries.

The master disciplinarian will have to come up with a new attacking combination, using Samba Orion and Sizolwethu 'Nunu' Shabalala.

A victory will keep Swallows in the title race, as they are currently in third position on the standings

'BIRDS' IN CRUNCH MADLENYA CLASH

with 27 points.

While on the opposite dugout, William 'Masondeza' Gamedze will rely on the likes of Sethu Ngcamphalala, Melusi 'Vardy' Tfwala and Lethokuhle Gamedze to stun the home side.

The trio is among the capable players in the Siphofaneni-based side camp following the departure of their workaholic captain Lucky Gamedze to Young Buffaloes.

A win can keep Madlenya outside the chances in the title race with the resilient minnows still sitting within the top five bracket.

PLAYERS TO WATCH:

Swallows: Siyabonga Zwane

The marauding attacking midfielder will be the main man for the 'Beautiful Birds' mission to secure maximum points against the stubborn opponents. He possesses dazzling skills and excellent eye for goal and the Madlenya defence should keep a close on the skillful former Vovovo and Seven Dreams man.

Madlenya: Melusi 'Vardy' Tfwala

The former National Under 20 player has fitted like a hand in glove in the Siphofaneni based set up since his return to the team from Nsingizini Hotspurs in the current transfer window.

He possesses good on

and off the ball run and good shooting technique which could be a problem the Swallows defence marshalled by Ghanaian international Kingsley Kwayi.

THE FULL MTN PREMIER LEAGUE FIXTURE

Saturday:

Mkhuzweni Technical Centre
M/Swallows vs Madlenya
3:00pm

Mayaluka Stadium
Illovo vs Green Mamba
3:00pm

Mavuso Sports Centre
Ezulwini Utd vs M/ Highlanders
2:00pm

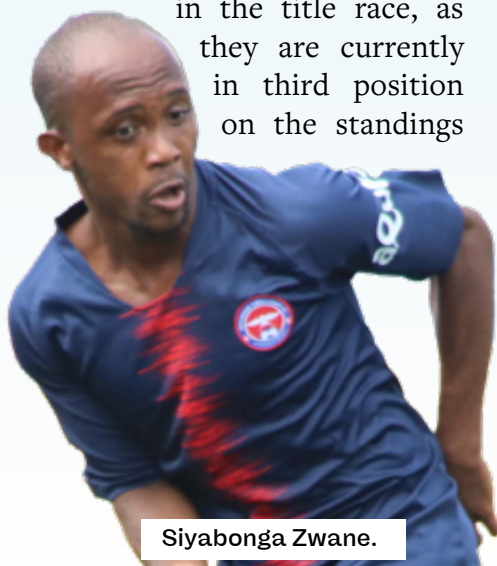
Wanderers vs R/Leopard
4.30pm

Tambankulu Stadium
D/Sundowns vs M/Pirates
3:00pm

Sunday

King Sobhuza II Stadium
Sea Birds vs Nsingizini Spurs
1:00pm

Rangers vs Young
Buffaloes
3:00pm



Siyabonga Zwane.



Dumisani Dlamini.

NAIL-BITING INGWENYAMA CUP LAST 8 FIXTURES SET TO THRILL FANS

... Here are the players who have played for both capital city giants in the famous Mbabane Big derby

Sibusiso Masilela
Sports Reporter

The journey to the Ingwenyama Cup E1.4 million first prize money surges closer as eight teams are now left in the prestigious knockout tournament.

We review the last eight draw conducted on Monday at SMVAF Offices with the 'battle of greens' between Green Mamba and Nsingizini Hotspurs being the biggest quarterfinal fixture.

Green Mamba vs Nsingizini Hotspurs

It's an epic one!

Defending champions Green Mamba have been handed an acid test in the last eight as they will take on cup specialist Nsingizini Hotspurs in the biggest quarterfinal clash.

The Correctional side is blessed with some seasoned performers in their camp who have won many battles such as Njabulo 'Tfwala, Mthunzi 'Xavi' Mkhontfo, Sabelo 'Sikhali' Ndzinisa and Njabulo 'D4D' Ndlovu.

The experienced quartet orchestrated the recent 4-0 demolition of the same opposition during the two team's



recent league meeting.

The 'Southerners' have proven themselves as cup specialist after winning back-to-back Momo Cup success which makes them the team to watch in the quarterfinals.

The Hluthi based side has got depth and quality in their camp such as Nomore Tsabore, Thubelihle Mavuso and Sambulo 'Masoso' Simelane who have done

well for the team this season.

Buffaloes vs Madlenya

The 2018 champions are faced with a mammoth task of overcoming the giant slayers that recently claimed the scalp of hub giants Manzini Wanderers during the last 16 to set up a date with the ruthless army side.

The Mandla 'Sitofu' Dlamini

have already massacred premier league minnows Illovo during the last 16 and Madlenya should weary about the free scoring 'Amathole Ezinyathi'.

Buffaloes have also signed Madlenya captain Lucky Gamedze who is cup tied as he has already featured for his former side in the same tournament.

'Amathole Ezinyathi' are still a majority of the players who last tasted glory with the team in 2018 such as Sandile 'Saviola' Gamedze, Mpendulo 'Mpetha' Dlamini and Sihlangu Mkhwanazi.

Meanwhile, the resilient Siphofaneni based will be parading their hard fighting youngsters such as Sehluko Nkabindze, Lethokuhle Gamedze and Melusi 'Vardy' Tfwala who are likely to steal the show on the day and possibly cause an upset.

Mbabane Highlanders vs Ezulwini United

Soccer fans will be handed a double dose of action between the two sides as they will meet twice within seven days both in the league and the quarterfinals.

United recently enlisted the services of experienced defender Mandla Palma from Highlanders who is also cup tied for the richest knockout tournament.

The 'Stingers' as United are fondly known have also produced the tournament's current top goal scorers and former Highlanders' winger Mphucuko 'Smoothies' Dlamini with five goals.

The 'Black Bull' will be parading their star-studded midfield comprising of Banele 'Pupu' Sikhondze, Emmanuel Owunsu and Philani Mkhonto.



Fans will be eager to see the team that will conquer the back-to-back clashes between the two sides.

Mbabane Swallows vs Pigg's Peak Rangers

The tournament most successful team Mbabane Swallows quest to clinch their title will have to go via First Division minnows Pigg's Peak Rangers in the quarterfinals.

The 'Beautiful Birds' will have to avoid an upset against the northern Hhohho outfit that recently claimed the scalp of Moneni Pirates in the last 32 stage.

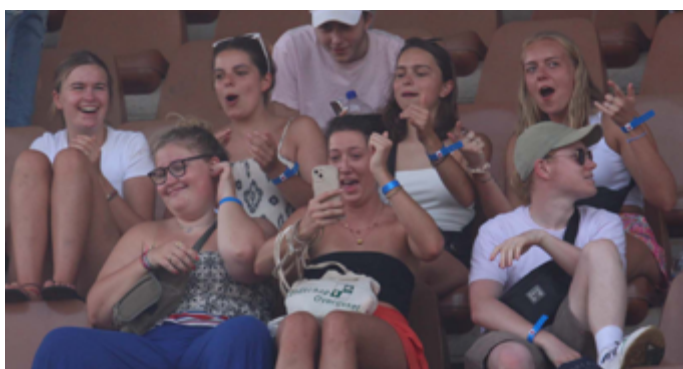
Swallows head coach Caleb Ngwenya will rely on the experience of Ayanda Gadlela, Siyabonga Zwane and

Sizolwethu 'Nunu' Shabalala with the seasoned duo of Felix 'Fela' Badenhorst and Sandile Hlatshwako both ruled out for the encounter due to injuries.

Rangers have got experienced players in their camp such as Mathokoza Tfwala (ex-Royal Leopard), Lindokuhle 'Ntolo' Fakudze (formerly with Highlanders and Manzini Wanderers) and Mbuso Dladla (formerly with Malanti Chiefs and Nsingizini Hotspurs).

The ex-premier league trio have been the minnows vital cogs during the previous matches and they are already guaranteed over 100 000 for reaching the quarterfinals (E75 000 and the E30 0000 best first division finisher prize money).





THE KWAKHE THWALA FAILED SA MOVE DEBACLE

INTERNATIONAL MOVES SHOULD BE PROPERLY PLANNED — DINGANE MADUMA

Sibusiso Masilela
Sports Reporter

The country's only FIFA accredited agent Dingane Maduma has advised his colleagues to properly plan international moves for players.

This follows the collapse of Mbabane Swallows utility player Kwakhe Thwala's move to Chippa United which crumbled at the eleventh hour before the South African transfer deadline.

The Sihlangu player attended two assessments with the 'Chilli Boys' under the guidance of Morgan Mammilla before turning home under unforeseen circumstances ahead of Swallows recent crunch clash against Green Mamba.

"It is very important for agents to ensure that everything is in place before sending players to trials such as air tickets and accommodation which I normally do when sending a player to an assessment. The proper documentation should be in place before flying a player out to avoid situations whereby he ends up being stranded in foreign countries," he said.

He further advised club owners to do proper research on players before engaging them.

He said this can help to avoid agent cheating which also spoils relationships between the involved parties.

Meanwhile the player's agent Charles Domingos asked not to comment on the matter saying they were now focusing on

getting another move for the player.

The player declined to comment on the matter.

He stated that his entire focus was on helping the Swallows compete for domestic competitions such as MTN Premier League and SMVAF Ingwenyama Cup.

Thwala collapsed move should have increased the country's international list five players which currently comprises of Lindo Mkhonta (Zesco United, Zambia), Justice Figareido (Richards Bay, South Africa), Banele 'Stiga' Ndzabandzaba (Botswana police XI) and Mxolisi Mkhonto (Jwaneng Galaxy, Botswana).

The two parties are said to have failed to agree on the E1 million which was allegedly placed Swallows towards the end of the negotiations. According to independent investigations conducted by the Eswatini Daily News, the figures was increased from E500 000 which resulted in the collapse of the deal.

Meanwhile, Swallows stated that they had already agreed to clear the player to Chippa United hence the player attended trials at the South African side through a recent statement.

The capital city giants further denied that they didn't contribute to the collapse of the deal as they were willing to release the former National Under 23 players.

The 'Beautiful Birds' further player decided to rejoin them after spending several days with his potential suitors.

Kwakhe Thwala.



OVER 500 RUNNERS FOR YELLOW EPILEPSY CHARITY HALF MARATHON



Ntokozo Magongo
Sports Reporter

The winners from the over 500 runners that will compete in the Eswatini Yellow Epilepsy Half Marathon will take home E2 000 in both males and female category.

The 21km, 10km and 5km race will be held on Saturday at Lobamba between Somhlolo National Stadium and the OlmypAfrica Sports Development Centre. Athletics Eswatini (AE) Communications Officer Victor 'Mavikane' Dlamini announced on Wednesday.

The Yellows Epilepsy Charity Half Marathon is set to be bigger and better as already over 455 runners have registered for the event so far for all the three

events.

The manual registration can be done at Eswatini Epilepsy Organization offices in Mbabane, at the Deputy Prime Minister offices, The Fitness Zone in Ezulwini and Manzini and Futis branches in Mbabane, Matsapha, Manzini, Nhlengano, Siteki and Siphofaneni.

"Manual registration is still open for runners, and we played people to come in their numbers as they will benefit a lot. Early registration was closed on January 15 and the late registration which is now manual will be closing on Friday end of business," he said.

The race will start at 6am.

Dlamini said they are happy with the numbers as they have

improved from the 370 that competed last year in Sikhuphe. He said they were still hoping to meet the 600 targets with three days remaining.

The registration:

21km	E180
10km	E150
5km	E120

The prize breakdown:

Category	Men	Women
21km		
1	E2 000	E2 000
2	E1 000	E1 000
3	E800	E800
4	E700	E700
5	E600	E600
6	E500	E500
7	E400	E400
8	E300	E300
9	E200	E200
10km		
1	E1 500	E1 500
2	E900	E900
3	E700	E700
4	E600	E600
5	E500	E500
6	E400	E400
7	E300	E300
8	E200	E200
9	E150	E150

Veteran

21km	E180	E180
10km	E150	E150

Master

21km	E180	E180
10km	E150	E150

Grand Master

21km	E180	E180
10km	E150	E150

RUNNERS TO WIN BIG IN LACTALIS #RESOLUTION RUN

Ntokozo Magongo
Sports Reporter

Runners to win in the Lactalis #Resolution Run will win big after Lactalis Eswatini (Formerly Parmalat) sponsored the event to the tune of E70 000.

E45 000 of the package will go towards the prizes while the rest will cater for water point among other things. The race will be held on February 17 at the Mlilwane Wildlife Sanctuary, Lobamba.

The sponsorship was launched on Thursday at 23:28 Lounge in Mbabane. The event will include the 21km, 10km and 5km. It is hosted by Big Games Park in conjunction with Athletics Eswatini (AE).

Big Games Park Sales and Marketing Manager Xolani Gama said they are yet to release the prize breakdown. The Lactalis sponsored had in increase of E15 000 from last year's E55 000 sponsorship.

"This shows that the event is growing each and every year. It started in 2016 and Lactalis is the main sponsor while there are other sponsors that will assist especially with water points," he said.

Gama said they will have at



least one water point for every 3km.

Meanwhile, Gama announced that registration for the event was still open. She said registration can be done on their website www.biggamespark.org/event or at The Gables, Ezulwini and Mbabane Pick'n Pay.

Already over 400 runners have registered for the event. Some of the athletes will come from outside

the country including countries, Mozambique, South Africa and United Kingdom Athletics Eswatini (AE) Communications Officer Victor 'Mavikane' Dlamini said they are targeting over 700 runners for this year's event.

Registration and starting times:

Event	Entry fee	Starting time
21km	E230	5:30am
10km	E140	6am
5km	E100	6:10am

ESWATINI CRASHES OUT OF AFRICAN GAMES QUALIFIERS



Volleyball Beach males and females teams during the recent African qualifiers.

Ntokozo Magongo
Sports Reporter

The country's 2024 African Games beach volleyball dream has been washed away.

The follows the beach volleyball national team exit in the African Games qualifiers recently played in Botswana.

The defeats ended the national team for qualifying in the multi sporting codes continental spectacle scheduled for March in Ghana.

The male duo of Nduku Masangane and Mlamuli Simelane

lost all their pool matches against South Africa, Mozambique, and Namibia.

The ladies side comprising of Nonhlanhla Khoza and Nokulunga Kunene suffered the same ordeal as they went to down to Botswana, Mozambique and Angola.

Top male player Masangane said he was happy with their performance despite the loss.

"We did our best even though we didn't have enough time to gel as a team. I am confident that we will improve in the next international competitions.

We are grateful for the support that we have received from the Eswatini Sports and Recreation Council and Eswatini Olympic and Commonwealth Games Association (EOCGA) during the tournament," he said.

Team Eswatini results:

Males

Mozambique 2-0 Eswatini
South Africa 2-1 Eswatini
Namibia 2-0 Eswatini

Ladies

Mozambique 2-0 Eswatini
Angola 2-0 Eswatini
Botswana 2-0 Eswatini

REPS ENTERS ESWATINI POOL FESTIVAL HALL OF FAME

Sibusiso Masilela
Sports Reporter

Royal Eswatini Police Service pool have re-written the history books by becoming the first team to win the Eswatini Pool Festival team tournament.

The police side got the better of Ludzeludze by 13-8 during the finals of the teams' category recently played Manzini Pool club.

The blue and took home an improved E4 500 first prize money while the runner up received E25 00.

REPS booked their place in the finals with a resounding 13-9 win over rivals Correctional while Ludzeludze outsmarted Malkerns 13-5.

The tournament coordinator Sithembiso 'Dodge' Matsebula congratulated the champions for their achievement.

"We are pleased with the proceedings of the tournament. Congratulations are in order for the champions, and we are looking forward to a bigger and better tournament next year," he said.

He further appreciated the support from the Eswatini Sport and Recreation Council (ESRC).

"We are grateful for the support that we have received from ESRC which contributed immensely towards the success of the tournament,".

ESRC contributed E45 000 towards the pool spectacle which also involved singles categories where international players were also in attendance.

He further stated that the tournament was going to return next year.

"We are looking forward to a bigger and better tournament

in 2024. We further applaud local players commitment in the tournament as their performance proved the capabilities of the local players,"

Some of the outstanding local players include Ncobile Dlamini and Nathie 'Bhubesi' Sihlongonyane who both reached the finals the singles category of the pool spectacle under the flagship of the Eswatini Cue Sports Association (ESCA).

The full results

Semifinals

REPS 13-9 Correctional

Ludzeludze 13-5 Malkerns

Final

REPS 13 -8 Ludzeludze

The prize breakdown

1. 4500 REPS
2. 2500 Ludzeludze
3. 1500 Malkerns
4. 1500 Correctional



CONDOLENCES POUR FOR NDEZI MASANGANE

Sibusiso Masilela
Sports Reporter

Black Leopards and Mbabane Highlanders have mourned the passing of their legend Bongani 'Ndezi' Masangane.

Masangane passed away on Monday afternoon while undergoing treatment at Mbabane government hospital joining the likes of Kwanele Dlamini and Mukelo Nkhambule in the list of local footballers that recently passed away.

The South African First Division side President David Thidiela said they have been saddened by the demise of the former Sihlangu defender.

"We have been deeply saddened by the passing of Bongani who was one of our outstanding Swazi players together with the Sibusiso 'Spoko' Dlamini and Wonder Nhleko. We will forever cherish his contribution to the team and our sincere condolences to his family and the Eswatini football fraternity," he said.

Highlanders Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Musa Masuku shared the same sentiments with Thidiela by mourning the passing of the player.

"On behalf of the entire Mbabane family, we have been shattered by the passing of 'Ndezi' who is one of legends and exports who represented us proudly in South Africa. Masangane had an undying love



Bongani 'Ndezi' Masangane.

for our team as he even rejoined us after his stint with Leopards without a problem,"

The late Masangane played for the Limpopo based side between 2003 and 2005 together with Sibusiso 'Spoko' Dlamini and Wonder Samba jive' Nhleko.

He rejoined Highlanders in 2006 before his retirement.

He had a couple of senior national teams caps under the guidance of the late Zambian coach Francis Banda.

Masangane will be laid to rest tomorrow at his parental homestead Mzimnene,

**He was jolly person —
'Barnes', 'Shisa Junior'**

The late Bongani 'Ndezi' Masangane has been described as a jolly person by his former Sihlangu teammates Sifiso 'Barnes' Mkhulisi and John 'Shisa Junior' Mdluli.

Mkhulisi, who also played with the late Masangane, said the former Black Leopard player also had sense of humour.

"The late Masangane possessed different characters at Highlanders and during national team assignments where he used to be a ring-leader for the chaotic players during camps where he would steal clothes for some of the senior players. He was always a serious person at Sihlangu where he would even play with an injury. I will forever cherish the times I spent with him both at national and club level," he said.

Mdluli also shared almost the same sentiments with Mkhulisi.

"Ndezi had sense of humour and he loved football a lot. We started playing together in the dusty streets of Mzimnene. He was one of the players to emerge from our area," he said.

Masangane also had a brief stint with the national First Division outfit Malanti Chiefs.



WEEKEND SPORTS GUIDE

‘WESLIANS’, LEOPARD HEADLINES

WEEK 16 MTN PREMIER LEAGUE FIXTURES

Sibusiso Masilela
Sports Reporter

Another blockbuster awaits football fans this weekend in the MTN Premier League between current log leaders Royal Leopard and hub giants Manzini Wanderers on Saturday at Mavuso Sports Centre.

Runners will be battling out in the 2024 Epilepsy Half marathon on Saturday featuring over 500 local and international runners in Lobamba.

This is what to expect this weekend in the sporting world.

Football

Fans will be treated to a double header dose at Mavuso Sports Centre between Ezulwini United and Mbabane Highlanders. The match will be followed by the potential thriller between

Royal Leopards and relegation threatened Manzini Wanderers.

Athletics

The Athletics Eswatini in conjunction with Eswatini Epilepsy Organisation will host the Epilepsy Half marathon at Lobamba. Runners will be competing in the 21km and 10km with the race expected to be attended by international runners from South Africa.

Volleyball

Its action galore for Volleyball lovers as the Eswatini National Volleyball Association will stage the Mula Sport Series ladies league tournament at Olymp Africa Centre.

The tournament will determine the four teams that will later on compete in the semifinals of the second annual knockout tournament.

Elsewhere B Division will be competition in the ongoing league at Zakhele Courts.

Golf

Golfers will be teeing in grand style at the Mbabane club during the Eswatini Royal Corporation January monthly mug which is expected to be attended by a field of 60 golfers.

The Nkonyeni golf estate will also host the Shamrock deli competition to be played under the betterball format with over 30 golfers expected to be in attendance. Several prizes will be won by the most outstanding golfers in both tournaments.

The Manzini golf club will also organize the Mashayinkonjane monthly mug on Saturday set to feature over 40 golfers who will be competing under the medal format.



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