



profile\*





# HE'S ON FIRE

*TV coverage of Lungi Ngidi dismissing one of the best cricketers in the business will be etched in the minds of South African fans – and especially his proud parents – for a long time to come. David Knowles finds out more about a young man who is living his dream*

It's said the calibre and characteristics of a man are measured in how he unravels in his journey through life. His childhood, his upbringing, the example set by his parents, his respect for those around him and how he values the roots from which he grew, are all attributes

in determining the fine line between success and failure.

Such a man is current Protea fast bowler Lungi Ngidi. The tall, burly 21-year-old is fast becoming the hottest property in World Cricket with red or white ball in hand and, while he is a fearsome prospect charging in from 22 yards, that's about the meanest he will ever get.

Everyone loves a fairy tale and this one has the bonus of being real, a story of a boy from Kloof who took the opportunities which came his way. While his tale is far from over, he is taking every step with humility and purpose, working hard to reap reward.

His humble parents – Jerome and Bongi – work and live at Kloof Junior Primary School. It was here that Lungi watched the regular Saturday morning Dads and Lads cricket programme, itching to be involved. He knew of Makhaya Ntini and wanted to be like him. He asked to be included and soon gained a reputation as a youngster who had something and whose dreams of emulating his hero were not far-fetched.

"I always wanted to be a bowler and was soon known

as Ntini," said Lungi. "After doing two years at Kloof Senior Primary I was selected for a full scholarship to Highbury in Hillcrest. It was there, as a boarder, that I benefitted from what the school offered when it came to sport."

And hard work paid off. He played 2nd team cricket in Grade 6, moving to the 1sts in Grade 7. He made the KZN U13 team and was the Most Improved Player that year. Besides cricket, he captained the school's 1st basketball team, played 1st team rugby, was awarded honours for swimming, and broke the shot put, high jump and cricket ball

## HUMILITY

Protea fast bowler Lungi Ngidi. The tall, burly 21-year-old is fast becoming the hottest property in World Cricket.

throwing records.

"Lungi was respectful, polite and well-mannered. His humility and modesty stood out and those traits are ever present, despite what he continues to achieve," said Rory Wood, director of sport at Highbury.

Hilton College followed Highbury and again, Lungi swam, played rugby and was nurtured in his cricket talent. "I played rugby for the U14A, U15A and U16A sides at fullback, before giving it up to focus on cricket. The injuries were mounting," he said. "Under Shane Gaffney, Hilton's director of cricket and then 1st team coach Neil Johnson, I realised I could take the game further »







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### HUMBLE PARENTS

Jerome and Bongji – work and live at Kloof Junior Primary School

and chase my ambition to make the Proteas."

Off the field, Lungi was recognised as a leader and, in his final year, was head of Newnham House, where his humility left a mark on the current Grade 12s who were new boys then. There is also renewed interest in cricket thanks to him.

Taking on Industrial Sociology and Labour Studies at Tuks, Lungi was soon turning out for the Titans before earning a call-up to the Protea T20 squad last season against Sri Lanka. He played in all three matches before a back injury saw him sidelined for the rest of the season. Now, as 2018 dawned, he has returned fitter and with purpose in his soul.

"To be selected for the Test side against India was something unexpected, especially after the injury. Now it's a matter of making every opportunity count. Aiden Markram officially gave me my cap on my debut at my home ground in Centurion," he said.

That debut saw Ngidi play a massive role in South Africa's 135-run win in the second Test. He was Man of the Match with 7-90, including 6-39 in the second innings. However, the best was yet to come.

Jerome and Bongji were flown up to Johannesburg for the third Test by CSA, staying in the same hotel as the players and watching every day live. They saw their boy capture the wicket of Indian skipper Virat Kohli, and for Bongji it was her first time on a plane.

"We were treated like a king and queen and it was

“Aiden Markram officially gave me my cap on my debut at my home ground in Centurion”

very special. We met Kagiso Rabada's parents and spent some time with Lungi in the evenings. As for Bongji on the plane, she had me next to her so there was nothing to fear," said Jerome.

For the Lungi's parents, this is a life-changing journey. "It's all thanks to God. He has a plan for us and we are blessed with what has come our way," said Jerome.

Lungi has bought a retirement home for his parents with his first salary cheque and perhaps there is no irony that his second name is True-Man, as that is exactly what he is. \*

