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Ngidi is proof that a widening pipeline works

EVERY accolade that is currently coming Lungi Ngidi's way is thoroughly deserved. The young man bowled superbly well and exceeded his wildest dreams on a magical Test debut.

The 21-year-old has certainly been taken aback with all the well-wishes that have come his way.

"To be honest, it's actually difficult to describe," he said.

"It's not something I'm used to, so every time it really does hit me.

"You get goosebumps and get nervous all over again. It really is an honour to have people appreciate the work that you're doing out there, so it's hard to describe but it really is a blessing."

The fact that Ngidi's background story is such a feel-good one too is even more heart-warming. It was only

through a scholarship that he entered the hallowed halls of Hilton College as Ngidi's mother was a domestic worker and his father a maintenance worker at a local school.

Everything Ngidi has achieved vindicates Cricket South Africa's transformation policy. It shows what is possible when equal opportunities are afforded to everyone.

Ngidi's success is though also a tribute to the pioneers

that paved the way before him. And here I am not even referring to the Sacos freedom fighters that kept non-racial sport alive and flourishing during Apartheid.

A recent interview with current acting CSA chief Thabang Moreo reminded me of the adversity black sportsmen endured in the early years of "The New South Africa".

Moreo was also a talented

young fast bowler that was plucked from Soweto and plopped at King Edward High School in the plush suburbs of Johannesburg. Unlike the support Ngidi received at Hilton, and later at Tuks and the Titans, Moreo was left to find his own way and ultimately fell out of love with the game.

Moreo was certainly not the only one. I vividly remember a lightning quick fast bowler

Albert Nkomo from my school days. Nkomo hailed from Langa, earned a scholarship to Wynberg Boys High School, and represented South African Schools and the South Africa U-19 team back in 1986. He was also a talented hockey player, earning SA Schools colours in that code too.

Unfortunately after Nkomo left school he was not afforded any of the playing opportunities at provincial

level that Ngidi now regularly gets to showcase his talent despite being on the contract list at Western Province.

Nkomo played the odd match, with an exhibition touring game against the West Indies at Langa Stadium one of them, but was allowed to drift away into obscurity. The last time I saw Nkomo he was working behind the counter at the Municipality Office in Pinelands and completely

disinterested in cricket. Cricket South Africa have taken numerous shots to the body about its transformation policy. The Kolpak exodus that was reignited at the beginning of last year after some high-profile departures placed it under even greater pressure.

But yet the pipeline continues to produce quality cricketers – both black and white – that go on to serve the Proteas with distinction.

The only difference is that the pipe is now wider and aims to create equal opportunity. Lungisani Ngidi is the proof in the pudding.

