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**Zola Doda:** Hi, Thabo. How has your first season been so far at Ajax Cape Town, whom you joined from University of Pretoria?

**Thabo Mosadi:** From the playing side, I think I've gelled well with the guys. Everything is good.

I'm not complaining. I've been getting game-time and doing well for the team.

**ZD:** What was it like to adjust in the first few weeks?

**TM:** Everyone knows we didn't have the best of starts but, as soon as we gelled, we started winning. I started well, but I can't judge myself. I have to look at the entire team because it's not about me, it's about Ajax Cape Town. I can play well, but this is about the team and if the team is not doing well I can't be happy. The whole team has to do well. If one player is doing well, but the team isn't, then there is no team there.

**ZD:** You are keeping Lebohang Mokoena, a fan-favourite in South African football, out of the team. How do you feel about that?

**TM:** In my opinion, we are not competing for the same place. We play on the wing but not in the same position. I can play left and right and he can do the same as well. I can also play behind the striker, so I don't think we play in the same position. But 'Cheeseboy' is a good player and someone I respect a lot.

**ZD:** Sure.

**TM:** I get along with him and we talk a lot. We are both from Jo'burg and when we came here, it was easy for us to get along. We communicate a lot and he is a great person. Right now, he's not playing, but he always comes to training with a positive mindset and he doesn't give the coach a bad attitude. It's just a matter of time before he gets back into the team.

**ZD:** Can you and Cheeseboy play in the same team?

**TM:** We played in the same team earlier this season where Cheeseboy was on the left, I was on the right and Mark Mayambela was in midfield... Mark was more behind the strikers. One day, maybe, if we can play like that no team will stop us.

**ZD:** How do you feel when you see the rise of Cape Town City, while Ajax seem to be on a downward spiral?

**TM:** I'm happy for them. The fact that they are doing well also means that we must pull up our socks, compete and make sure we move away from where we are. Our goal is to move away from our current pos-



# We should do our own thing

**Ajax Cape Town might be struggling to get results, but winger Thabo Mosadi is a breath of fresh air in what has been a difficult season. After showing promising signs towards the end of 2016 under new coach Stanley Menzo, Urban Warriors have failed to win a match in the new year. Their Nedbank Cup defeat to lower league side KwaDukuza United was the lowest point of their season. But Mosadi's performance has been outstanding and it's believed that it's only a matter of time before he gets a national team call-up. With only a few games remaining for the season, the 26-year-old tells Soccer Laduma's Zola Doda that they will fight tooth and nail...**

## He's a very humble boy

Lebohang Mokoena - Ajax Cape Town midfielder

"I've watched Thabo from his days at University of Pretoria and, for me, he is the type of winger that is very creative in one-on-one situations. He has so much speed and now that I'm a bit older I always tell him, 'I used to be as quick as you.' We always laugh about it and he tells me that he used to watch me. But he is a very humble boy, who's looking to achieve things. I believe he has a lot to offer. As soon as he establishes himself, he must work on getting a call-up to the national team. It's



just a matter of time before he develops his game more tactically... he will surely be one of the best players. Early on in the season, when Roger de Sa was still in charge, we played together against Polokwane City and Orlando Pirates. When you play with players from ekasi, there's a lot of creativity and it looks amazing. I also hope I will get a chance to play with him in the first team. I always encourage him and maybe one day he will catch the eye of one of the big teams."

## THABO MOSADI FACT FILE

**Date of birth:** 10 September 1990  
**Place of birth:** Kaitleng, Gauteng  
**Nickname:** Jezebel / S'bam somdoko  
**Position:** Midfielder  
**Jersey number:** 23  
**Club:** Ajax Cape Town  
**Previous clubs:** Jomo Cosmos Juniors, Alexandra United, University of Pretoria



**ZD:** At the beginning of the season, you went 10 matches without a win. Personally, did that make you think you might end up fighting relegation like you did at Tuks?

**TM:** I did think about it but, as players, we are always telling ourselves that we don't want to be lying at the bottom of the log. We sat down as players and spoke about what we want. Most of us know what it's like to fight relegation and some of the players were here when Ajax were involved in a relegation fight a few seasons ago. We told ourselves we need to start winning matches to move away from where we are. Now we are fighting to get into the top eight and from there try to maintain our momentum.

**ZD:** After failing to win a match in 10 outings, you went on to win three matches in a row, including against Mamelodi Sundowns at home.

**TM:** I think we understood what the coach (Stanley Menzo) wanted us to do and we were playing more like a team. We were consistent in terms of our starting line-up and things were falling into place. But it's the December break that affected our performance. I don't think there was a team that could stop us because we lost one out of six and our confidence was high. We understood each other - the spirit was high, we went to matches knowing exactly what we were going to do and how we were going to win, but the break disrupted us. We spent a lot of time without playing and we had to start all over again. Like I said, I don't understand why we started slow.

**ZD:** What is it like working under Menzo?

**TM:** He is a good coach. He wants to play football, he is disciplined and his tactics are good. As players, we have to understand him. He always tells us to try and think like him and that, as soon as we do what he wants us to do, things will be fine. In the first round when we started winning matches, we were doing things he wanted us to do. We need to adjust quickly.

**ZD:** People say he is very strict and demanding.

**TM:** That's true. But he is a good coach and he has time to play, but when it's work, it's time to work.

## "I love football with all my heart."

When you are dealing with a strict person, you just have to do the right thing so that you won't have a problem with him. I always try by all means to do things right, but as you know, things don't always turn out right. In football, sometimes you might think you are doing something right, but the coach doesn't always think so. But I always try to do good things so that I can be on the safe side with the coach. We are learning a lot under him and we are trying to do what he wants so that we can get good results.

**ZD:** What is his football philosophy?

**TM:** He wants us to keep the ball until the right moment. He doesn't like us losing the ball cheaply. He wants us to protect it and keep it. We shouldn't rush or force things.

**Supporters Club Member Question**

**Dave asks Thabo Mosadi:**

**Describe Stanley Menzo's training sessions.**

**Thabo Mosadi:** "Stanley Menzo is a professional, direct and strict coach. He always wants things done the right way and his European method is the best. I enjoy it! We get to play or approach games the best way that suits us."

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**ZD:** Let's talk about your career a bit more. How would you describe your journey to professional football?

**TM:** Every player goes through trials and tribulations because we all want to see ourselves playing professional football. When you are an amateur player, all you need to do is work hard and never tell yourself that you are better than anyone else. Right now, football is not about how much talent you have... hard work is what counts. Football knows better than anyone. Players forget that football can make you and break you. You must love football because you get paid for what you love - that is the most important thing. As an amateur looking for a team, make sure you don't give up. Always work hard, because you will never know who is watching. Every match you play, you must take it seriously.

**ZD:** What were some of the challenges you faced?

**TM:** I love football with all my heart. I used to play everywhere they wanted me to play because of the love I have for football. I played at Jomo Cosmos and went back to kasi and from there I joined Alexandra United after being recommended. I played at the Maimane Phiri Games where there was just so much skill. I also used to play like those players you see at the Maimane Phiri Games... using skill only. But, you know, as soon you get a professional team, a coach will tell you what he wants. You must always play according to the coach's instruction. You must not do your own thing. Those players know football and it's in their blood, but they need a coach that will understand and make them better players.

**ZD:** Do you regard showing off skill as 'showboating' and disrespectful to opponents?

**TM:** No, I don't see it that way. As South African footballers, it's what we grew up doing, so I don't understand why we have to stop it when we reach the professional level. This is South Africa and we should do our own thing. In other countries, they do their own things and we tend to copy that. Why can't those countries accept what we do? Most South African players - I can name 100 that I know - don't do it anymore because they feel people will start complaining. No, man, this is what we love and it's what we know. We must express ourselves.

**ZD:** When Sundowns beat Orlando Pirates 6-0, Percy Tau did a few tricks before he was stopped by his coach, Pitsso Mosimane.

**TM:** If your coach doesn't like you doing that, then don't do it. Don't disrespect a coach like that. But if he allows you to do it, then do it because that is what we South Africans do better. If you get a coach that embraces that, then do it. If not, then be professional, respect the coach and don't do it.

**ZD:** Thabo, thanks a lot and best of luck for the rest of the season.

**TM:** No problem. ☑

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