



Peter Raath: You hit a flurry of goals last year, including a brace against Milano United, but have hardly featured since then. What's wrong?

Siyambonga Madikane: It's all to do with a change in coaches. My goals came under Vusi Mkhathshwa. I scored my last league goal against Royal Eagles and then hit the winner when we knocked Real Kings out of the Nedbank Cup. That was around the time that Milton Dlamini took over. He wanted consistency, wasn't happy to change his winning team, so told me, "I understand that you were scoring but others are doing the job now." When Ashwin Sutton became our third coach of the season, he selected me for our home clash with Kings, but I was unfortunately injured in the match.

PR: After that 1-0 win, Mbombela not only lost their unbeaten home record but didn't pick up a single point during three successive league defeats.

SM: We've been playing nice, attractive football, creating chances left, right and centre, but not converting them. That's our only problem. I'd say that the team's kind of gelled to Sutton's style of play but haven't been lucky in front of goals, until we beat AmaTuks 2-0. For example, before AmaZulu netted their late winner during our 1-0 loss, we had five clear opportunities. Mbombela were all over them, but they got one chance and killed us. Our coach has been working on our finishing because that's the department where we're lacking. He's an attack-minded man, who knows that with Jermaine Christian and others in defence, everything's managed at the back. As you know, the very strong defender commands with his leadership skills and is doing a great job. We also have experienced attacking forwards such as Tshediso Patjie and Inky Masuku. Tshediso, a very quick winger, is good on the ball and can take people on, while Inky not only scored a brace during our 5-2 Nedbank Cup win over Days FC but another two goals against Tuks. Those results were a



SIYAMBONGA MADIKANE

NATIONAL FIRST DIVISION FOCUS

Persevere, don't give up!



Mbombela United's striker, Siyambonga Madikane, talks openly to Soccer Laduma's Peter Raath about his goals. He also discusses coaches, fans and his studies.

huge confidence booster.

PR: They must have also given the fans something to cheer about.

SM: I'm sure of that, as our supporters are not happy with our current situation compared to what the club achieved last season. Fans are always fans - they want to have a say. But we don't get abuse from them. Instead, when they recognise you in the street, it's all about having a small chat. We give them attention. Without those people, the club wouldn't be where

it is today. They empower us to work harder. Mbombela's not even worried about relegation (laughing). However, after drawing with Mthatha Bucks, our chances of reaching the play-offs are getting thinner and thinner. We could have sealed the game early but again the guys missed chances. Once we start converting more chances, the team will win by big margins. Vusi, Milton and Ashwin all use the same style of play but each coach has a different philosophy when it comes to motivation.

PR: Please tell us about your early years an amateur footballer under coach, David Byrne.

SM: About 10 years ago, when I played for Helvetia in the old Castle League, David was the person who helped me. I'm telling you. He taught me the basics of how to position myself as a striker. Everything I know came from him. He's like my father. We still speak regularly. I then moved to the Eastern Cape, where I obtained a diploma in Cost and Management Account-

ing at the Walter Sisulu University. Currently, I'm only just one subject short of getting my Bachelor of Technology degree. It was my mother who forced me to study.

PR: Have you spoken to your teammates about studying?

SM: Yes, Peter. I do try to encourage them. I've also given the guys tips about how to look after themselves by not spending all their money but investing it in order to support their families. The South African Football Players Union recently visited Mbombela to speak about bursaries. Some of our players are already interested to register for courses. Off the field, we communicate easily. Normally, if there's a home game on the weekend, the squad camps on a Friday night at a local lodge to keep focused. The club's very professional. They treat us well by providing good food and neat apartments. Although I'm away from my Lower Crossroads home, I feel very happy here in Mpumalanga.

PR: Before we let you go, didn't you also represent third-tier Buck Bucks and Zizwe United before being snapped up by FC Cape Town?

SM: That's correct. The African Beasts' boss, Mr (Errol) Dicks, monitored me as I netted each and every week during my three-month spell with Zizwe. He liked the way I played, but after signing my first pro contract under coach, David Bright, things didn't work out, as I wasn't given much game-time.

PR: Thanks, Siyambonga, and good luck.

SM: No problem, Peter. My message to all those youngsters growing up in townships around Cape Town is, "Persevere, don't give up. Focus on what you want to achieve in life." I also just want to thank my mentors Mangaliso Ntombana, Steve Makhaluza and Dumisani Soyamba for the contribution they've made in my career. □

THE LATEST NFD NEWS

- Acornbush United's star striker, Vellele Mdaka, whose side have a chance of promotion to the NFD, could be lost to SA. "My dream's to play in England, where my father lives. I already have my British citizenship and am going back when the season finishes. Not long ago, I scored 11 goals in six games for lower league side, Ossett Town, near Leeds," he told Soccer Laduma.
- Thanda Royal Zulu boss, Pierre Delvaux, has declined to be interviewed for now. "To be honest, let's rather chat when our job is done closer to the end of the sea-

- son. It's not done yet," he said.
- Referee Shane Chuma had his hands full during Mthatha Bucks' home clash with Real Kings. Besides awarding a second-half penalty to both clubs, he issued six cards (four to Kings), mostly for reckless challenges.
- Witbank Spurs' goalkeeper, Takudzwa Ndoro, who in June 2015 almost joined Lamontville Golden Arrows, is looking for a new club. The twin brother of Orlando Pirates' striker, Tendai, believes that he has the skills to play in the PSL. "At the moment, Spurs want me to renew my con-

- tract but I'm not getting game-time, mainly due to the foreigner rule. I also don't have an agent so it's not easy. However, I'm hoping for something good next season," he said.
- Cape Town All Stars have appointed Obinna Kenechukwu Okafor as their second assistant coach. The former Maritzburg United striker was previously a co-coach at football agent, Tim Sukazi's ABC Motsepe League team, TS Galaxy. This news was confirmed by the club's GM, Faez Dulvie. "Yes Okafor has joined us," he said.

