



Thanda in the driving seat

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While most of the focus has been on the Absa Premiership, Thanda Royal Zulu have gone about their business quietly in the National First Division (NFD).

Unless disaster strikes, Thanda - who have eight games to go - are a shoo-in to get promotion to the Premiership, as they lead second-placed Black Leopards by eight points.

In fact, Thanda need six more wins to be assured of a place in the top-flight league. It could even be less if Leopards drop points along the way.

In a fortnight, the two sides will meet in a game that could determine the outcome of the title, or leave it wide open.

Leopards have clawed their way back into contention after a good run in the second round, which has seen them collect 17 points since the beginning of the year.

Amabhubesi have led from the beginning and it looks like they will do so until the end. They are yet to lose at home.

They will hope to continue with their good form when they visit Jomo Cosmos next weekend, while Leopards will warm up for the Thanda game with a home clash

against Real Kings.

Coach Roger Sikhakhane has been flying under the radar for a long time and is likely to lead Thanda to the promised land. The KwaZulu-Natal side needs to keep calm and take it one game at a time.

But Leopards, who can smell blood, will not go down without a fight. However, even if they do not become champions, they will get another chance of going into the play-offs and will need to finish in the second or third spot to qualify for the play-offs with a 15th-placed side from the Premiership.

The battle for play-offs spots is hotting up, with Stellenbosch, Royal Eagles, Mthatha Bucks and Witbank Spurs all vying to finish in the top three.

While the focus has been at the top, another former Premiership side, Santos, could follow on the footsteps of Moroka Swallows.

The People's Team are languishing at the bottom of the NFD log and, just like Swallows, they face relegation to the ABC Motsepe League.

In fact, four of the bottom five spots are occupied by Cape Town clubs, with Limpopo side Magesi FC being the other one.

Cape Town All Stars, FC Cape Town and Milano United complete the list.



PROMISED LAND Roger Sikhakhane's Thanda Royal Zulu need six more wins to secure promotion

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NATIONAL FIRST DIVISION FIXTURES

FRIDAY: Cape Town All Stars vs Mbombela United (Parow Park, 3pm)

SATURDAY: University of Pretoria vs Royal Eagles (Tuks Stadium); Black Leopards vs Real Kings FC (Thohoyandou Stadium); FC Cape Town vs Milano United FC (NNK Rugby Stadium); Stellenbosch FC vs Witbank Spurs (Athlone Stadium); Mthatha Bucks vs Santos (Mthatha Stadium)

