



PAEZ BRACE SAVES CHIEFS FROM NEDBANK EMBARRASSMENT



Picture: BackpagePix

MATSHELANE MAMABOLO
 AT KABOKWENI STADIUM

ACORNBUSH UNITED(1) 1
 Sidumo 44
KAIZER CHIEFS(0) 2
 Paez 78, 85

HE MAY have been a journeyman whose goals to clubs ratio made a mockery of his position as a striker before he joined Amakhosi but with this brace yesterday, Venezuelan Gustavo Paez went a long way to silencing his detractors.

With yet another embarrassing defeat to a lower division outfit looming large for Chiefs in the Nedbank Cup, Paez came off the bench save the day

Two goals in seven minutes

against a 10-man Acornbush side that was fast beginning to dream they could add their name on to that glorious list – that includes AmaTuks, FC Cape Town and Baroka FC – of teams to have knocked Chiefs out of the country's premier club knockout competition made Paez the hero.

First he capitalised on a defensive blunder by the Acornbush centrebacks who collided as they attempted to clear the ball. The goal was just reward for Chiefs' persistent attacking from the hour mark as Acornbush went into their shell. Once cracked open, the ABC Motsepe League outfit was always going to fall apart and Chiefs kept on going at them.

The winner duly came when another substitute William

Thwala forced his way from the left and delivered the ball into the box. Paez hit it first time to send the net rattling and the Chiefs followers, who had been stunned into silence, celebrating their side's march to the quarter-final stage.

Yet for a long time it had looked as though the third-tier outfit would pull off a remarkable victory that would set them up nicely for the upcoming play-offs for promotion into the National First Division (NFD).

Having managed to take the lead just before half-time, despite being reduced to 10 men when Sandy Nyathi was sent off for a dangerous tackle on Erick Mathoho, Acornbush held their own against Chiefs.

Steve Komphela, aware he had to go for broke, sacrificed fullbacks Sibusiso Khumalo and Kgotso Moleko for attackers Paez and Thwala and the result were immediately evident. Their attacking approach was a far cry from their earlier display during which they allowed their hosts to get into their danger zone through long punts from the back.

When referee Chris Harrison sent off Nyathi, it appeared the ABC Motsepe League outfit were in trouble. Instead it was they who scored courtesy of their long-ball approach. A ball sent long to the left found Mduduzi Nkosi and he delivered an immediate cross that at first seemed innocuous only for Rhulani Sidumo to rush in from the right and headed it powerfully

past Khune at the near post.

But then midway through the first half, Chiefs pressed the home side into their own half and while they seemed to be doing well to keep Amakhosi a bay, it was only a matter of time before they cracked.

It was largely thanks to Masuku that Acornbush held on for as long as they did – the Man of the Match denying Chiefs on numerous occasions with some splendid saves.

But there was very little he could do to stop Paez from endearing himself to the Amakhosi faithful, who must now no longer remember that he came to their club on the back of an unimpressive scoring record with numerous clubs.

