



Bucks may face PSL wrath

By MKHULULI NDAMASE

PROMOTION-chasing Mthatha Bucks could find themselves in hot water after their fans pelted match officials with objects following their home defeat to Witbank Spurs at the weekend.

Bucks went down 2-1 in a match marred by questionable referee's decision.

The defeat dealt their PSL qualification aspirations a severe blow as it followed on the heels of another loss to Milano United away.

Unable to comprehend with the diminishing chances of securing play-offs berth, the home team's fans vented their anger at the officials as they felt their side was hard done when two penalty appeals were ignored and were also agrieved by the

general poor officiating of the match.

As the chase for direct PSL qualification or securing it via the play-offs intensifies, matches in the National First Division are becoming tightly contested duels with officials often being caught in the crossfire.

PSL confirmed that a report detailing the violent nature of the fans was submitted.

"We don't condone this sort of behaviour. We strongly condemn it in the strongest words possible. The report has been submitted - now the next step will be to forward it to the league prosecutor.

"Then the prosecutor will decide whether to prosecute or not," PSL spokesman Lax September said.

The incident was also roundly criticised by Bucks coach Ian Palmer who called for calm despite the

Unruly fans vent frustration out on match officials

mounting pressure facing the club.

"We are in the same boat as them. But like us, they must also stay focused. We understand their frustration because we had two penalties that were not given, but they should not have thrown bottles at the officials," he said.

If recent rulings on similar incidents are anything to go by, Bucks could be slapped with a fine because of their fans' unruly behaviour.

Palmer believes they should have wrapped up the game early had they converted the chances that they created.

"It was just one of those days where we beat ourselves. We were much better than them but we were

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just unfortunate that we lost by an own goal.

"This was a huge dent on our play-offs hopes but I told them that we must continue fighting until the end," he said.

This was their second consecutive loss and their first in Mthatha since November 2015.

While it was all doom and gloom at the Bucks camp, Spurs were rejoicing as the win moved them up to sixth spot on the National First Division log, while Amathofanyama further slipped down to number seven on the standings.

Because in the previous two seasons the teams that qualified for the playoffs had finished on at least 52 points, Palmer previously told the Dispatch that his charges were targeting the same number of points in their remaining games.

But with five matches left, Bucks can only finish the season with 51 points - that is if they can win all the games.

First up on Saturday will be an away encounter at Athlone Stadium in Cape Town against Stellenbosch FC.

Then next month, Bucks will welcome University of Pretoria before again going to Cape Town for a showdown with relegation-threat-

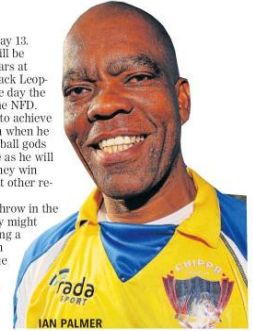
ened FC Cape Town on May 13.

Their last two games will be against Cape Town All Stars at home and third-placed Black Leopards away on May 28 - the day the curtain comes down on the NFD.

So, in order for Palmer to achieve the mandate he was given when he took over in January, football gods will have to be on his side as he will not only have to ensure they win their games, but hope that other results go their way.

Palmer has refused to throw in the towel and accept that they might not have a chance at having a shot at possibly playing in the Premier Soccer League next season.

"We still stand a mathematical chance," the coach said.



IAN PALMER

