

BACK AFTER EIGHT YEARS

Thanda back in the PSL

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BIG-TIME football will reach Richards Bay for the first time next season after Thanda Royal Zulu confirmed their promotion to the Absa Premiership with a 2-1 home victory over Stellenbosch FC at the Umhlathuze Sports Complex yesterday.

Goals from Khotso Malope and Michael Gumede took Thanda out of reach of second-placed Black Leopards in the standings. With three rounds left to play, Amabhubezi are 13 points clear and cannot be overhauled by the Limpopo outfit.

Cape side Stellenbosch dropped to third after Leopards drew their game goalless away to Royal Eagles in Pietermaritzburg. Stellenbosch's loss ended their chance of competing for the solitary automatic promotion spot.

Thanda's 15th win of the season, in which they've lost once thus far, returned them to the PSL following an eight-year absence. It's a significant turn-around for the coastal unit, who were almost relegated to the third tier of local football last season. However the management kept faith with coach Roger Sikhakhane who oversaw an unbeaten run of 16 games, until their defeat at University of Pretoria earlier this year.

Before their 2008/9 relegation Thanda were based in Durban and occasionally played out of Hammarsdale.



Roger Sikhakhane of Thanda Royal Zulu FC gets tossed in the air to celebrate their win during the National First Division game between Thanda Royal Zulu and Stellenbosch FC at Umhlathuze Sports Complex in Richards Bay. PICTURE: BACKPAGEPIX

Since their demotion they switched to the north coast, which means top-flight action for the Zululand region next season.

It brings back to three the number of KwaZulu-Natal clubs in the PSL. The past two seasons the province had only Golden Arrows and Maritzburg United in the big league,

after AmaZulu's relegation two years ago.

All going well it could be four KZN teams in the top flight, if AmaZulu or Royal Eagles, or even both teams, qualify for the play-offs. However AmaZulu and Eagles will need Stellenbosch and Leopards to drop further points in order to overtake them over

the remaining three rounds. Others in the race for the play-offs are Witbank Spurs, who drew 1-1 at Real Kings in Clermont, and Mbombela United who blasted FC Cape Town 3-1 in Mpumalanga.

That drubbing cost FCCT big time. They dropped to second-bottom, and swapped positions with Magesi, who

beat Cape Town All Stars 1-0.

Santos are virtually doomed to slip to the amateur ranks, after they drew 1-1 with Jomo Cosmos. They must win all their remaining games, and hope FCCT and Magesi lose all theirs.

In the eastern Cape Mthatha Bucks and University of Pretoria drew goalless.

