



Unlucky 13th draw holds Bucks back

By SIKHO NTSHOBANE

Mthatha Bureau

MTHATHA Bucks slumped to their 13th draw of the season after playing to a lacklustre 0-0 draw against University Pretoria at the Mthatha Stadium yesterday afternoon.

In fact both Amathol'amnyama goalkeeper Luvo Nkala and his AmaTuks counterpart Wensten van der Linde were made to look like spectators for most of the game with most of the action happening in the middle of the park where tackles were flying left, right and centre.

If there was any award for busiest man of the field, without a doubt it would have gone to the referee who had to blow his whistle time and again as players lunged into dangerous tackles.

Some of the promising moves either ended up being easily intercepted by opposition defenders or hoofed to safety. At other times, a promising move would collapse after an attacker failed to read the intentions of his fellow striker.

Although the local lads enjoyed more of the ball especially in central areas of the pitch, they could not penetrate AmaTuks's resolute defence of Chemon Petersen, Mason October and Tshepo Mosiathlaga astutely marshalled by experienced former PSL campaigner and team captain Shane Poggenpoel.

While both teams managed to keep the ball better in the second half, the first half was a different story altogether characterised by misplaced and sometimes overhit passes which failed to find a teammate and landed up at the feet of the opposing player or shots that went far off the goalposts.

Even the Mthatha Bucks fans renowned for their ability to spur on their team through their singing, were visibly quiet on the day, bar for the second half when they shouted at the bench to make a substitution after another promising move broke down when an attempted pass fell into the feet of an opposition defender just outside the

box.

While the first 15 minutes failed to produce any noticeable action, it wasn't until the 15th minute when Amathol'amnyama managed to string together four passes.

Winger Sibusiso Hlubi also tried his best to go past his man and bring in crosses but they ended up being easily cleared or would fly over the heads of his attackers.

With a little over 30 minutes the game finally threatened to come to life after a Bucks defender attempted a poor backpass to Nkala only for the ball to be intercepted by an AmaTuks player on the edge of the six-yard box.

But with Bucks defenders trying to recover the opposing player scuffed his shot and Nkala produced a one-handed save to deny them a goal.

The only other notable action came less than five minutes later when Van der Linde managed to intercept an overhit Bucks pass well outside the 18-yard only to hoof the ball right at the feet of a Bucks midfielder Nkululeko Buthelezi who was standing around the centre circle.

Without flinching, Buthelezi attempted an audacious lob from the centreline with Van der Linde scrambling to get back to the box while the ball flew over his head.

Unfortunately, the ball landed about 15 metres wide off the post.

At the end of the game, the game almost degenerated into a brawl as police had to separate players from both teams who wanted to have a go at each other.

Some dejected local fans shouted verbal abuse in the direction of Bucks coach Ian Palmer.

Palmer told the media that they had tweaked the team around for the game and introduced three new players who had never played before to check if they could cope with the tempo of the game.

"Mathematically there is no hope for a playoff spot. We wanted to see the players because we are trying to focus on building for the new season." — *sikhon@dispatch.co.za*

