



# Amabhubesi roar their way back into PSL

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Durban

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, Amabhubesi are

13 points clear and cannot be overhauled by the Limpopo outfit.

Cape side Stellenbosch dropped to third after Leopards drew goalless at Royal Eagles in Pietermaritzburg. Thanda's 15th win of the season, in which they lost once thus far, returned them to the elite league following an eight-year absence. It's a significant turnaround for the coastal unit who were almost relegated to the third tier last season.

However, the management kept faith with coach Roger Sikhakhane who oversaw an

unbeaten run of 16 games, until their only defeat at University of Pretoria earlier this year.

Before their 2008/9 relegation Thanda were based in Durban and occasionally played out of Hammarisdale. Since their demotion they switched to the north coast, which means top-flight action for the Zululand region next season. Their promotion brings back to three the number of KwaZulu-Natal clubs in the Premiership.

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 of local football, if AmaZulu or Royal Eagles, or even both teams, qualify for the promotional play-offs.

Teams that finish second and third enter a three-way play-off with the side that finishes second-bottom in the elite league.

The winner of that mini competition earns the right to play in the Premiership.

