



Shaun Bartlett.  
PICTURE: BACKPAGEPIX

# STRIVE TO SURVIVE - TUKS' BARTLETT

MOHAU RAMASHIDJA

Coach Shaun says FS Stars and Baroka are likely to suffer PSL drop zone blues

**F**REE STATE STARS need to be watchful as to how they tread in their last two league games, as failure might see them in the relegation pit at the end of the season.

This is the view of former Bafana Bafana international Shaun Bartlett who couldn't help but notice how the Bethlehem-based outfit had dropped places compared to where they had finished on the league standings in the past two seasons.

In the 2014/15 campaign, when Kaizer Chiefs won their second league title under newly-appointed Bafana coach Stuart Baxter, Ea Lla Koto finished ninth on the table with 38 points from 30 league outings.

Last season, they dropped to the 12th position, finishing just 10 points ahead of relegation-bound Jomo Cosmos and

Bartlett's University of Pretoria side, who were sitting on 25 points each.

In this campaign, Serame Letsoaka's side are merely two points ahead of bottom-placed Baroka and Chippa United who are sitting on 24 points.

The 44-year-old coach said he would be surprised if Ea Lla Koto survived the chop this time around.

"If Free State Stars do not get the chop at the end of the season, then it's guaranteed they'll be playing in the National First Division (NFD) after the next campaign in the Premiership," Bartlett said.

"They've been dropping in their performances for the past two seasons and if they do not sort out their problems soon,

they might find themselves getting the axe sooner rather than later.

"If they don't get relegated this season," Bartlett added. "Then the other team that won't survive the chop is Baroka.

"They've had an awful season.

"I don't see them pulling a surprise in their remaining two league matches. Highlands Park regained their confidence (following their 1-0 against Chippa United), and I don't see them dropping points against Baroka at Peter Mokaba Stadium (tonight)."

Ea Lla Koto host Bloemfontein Celtic at the Dr Molemela Stadium in the Free State capital tonight (kick-off 7.30pm).

Bartlett warns Stars not to

be over-confident against Siwelle thinking that they are going to saunter past them following their impressive 3-1 win over league challengers Bidvest Wits last week.

"They (Free State) just need to forget about their previous performances and start channelling all their focus in this match-up," Bartlett said.

"And this goes out to other relegation-threatened sides such as Baroka, Chippa United and Highlands Park.

"What happened in their previous matches, whether good or bad, must stay exactly there.

"They must never let their previous results affect their focus or performances in these crucial matches.

"Each game should be treated like it's a final.

"Failure to do so, might see them drop out of the elite league and into the NFD. So it's now or never."

