

Whether it's a start or from the bench, Aubrey Ngoma is ready!

RODNEY REINERS

IT HAS been a long, hard and frustrating slog, but Cape Town City winger Aubrey Ngoma can't wait to be back in action.

The 28-year-old, who has played such an influential role in the Cape side's rise to prominence, has not played since May this year. He sustained a knee injury while training with the Bafana Bafana Cosafa Cup squad – and, while recovering over the last few months, has had to watch both City and the South African national football team struggle.

Ngoma is likely to play some part when City resume PSL duty against log leaders Baroka FC at Cape Town Stadium on Tuesday, and he is determined to hit the ground running. Head coach Benni McCarthy, needless to say, is delighted to have the winger fit and available again, though it's not yet clear whether he will use Ngoma



Aubrey Ngoma

from the start or off the bench. Either way, the player is ready.

"The recovery has been a long road for me," said Ngoma. "But I've healed well and worked hard off the field to get myself back to full fitness.

"I am looking forward to getting back to playing again. It has been a few months without football for me, which is something no player wants to go through. My hunger for the game has always been there,

especially now that I'm this close to getting back on the field. I feel ready to take the leap and get back to playing."

From Hammanskraal, a township north of Pretoria, Ngoma started his junior career at community club Bolton Wanderers. He was then recommended to Sammy Troughton and Steve Barker, who, at the time, were joint-coaches at the University of Pretoria. Ngoma quickly made an impression and, by the time he turned 18, he was in Tuks' NFD squad, going on to play a key role in the team winning promotion to the PSL in 2012. In his first season in the top flight, Ngoma made his name by scoring a sensational four goals for Tuks in a 5-1 win over Ajax Cape Town. His performances placed him on the radar of the big PSL clubs – and it was Orlando Pirates who won the race for his signature.

Ngoma, though, failed to get going at the Soweto club. In 2015, after a move to

Mpumalanga Black Aces, under the tutelage of coach Muhsin Ertugral, the winger was to find his form again. And, after the purchase and relocation of Aces to the Mother City, Ngoma continued in the same vein for the new Cape club, developing a match-winning attacking partnership with Lebogang Manyama.

Manyama has since moved on to play for Konyaspor in Turkey, while Ngoma, unfortunately, had to sit injured on the sidelines. But, back now, the City star has an opportunity to elevate his name and presence back into the league and national picture again.

And there is, of course, no better way to do it than in a top-of-the-table clash when City take on surprise leaders Baroka on Tuesday. As it stands, the Polokwane-based club is on 17 points, with City, Golden Arrows and Bloemfontein Celtic joint-second on 15 points.