



Ke Yona Team Search makes dreams reality

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The Nedbank Ke Yona Team Search is beginning to bear its intended rewards after three of its products secured deals with Premier Soccer League (PSL) clubs.

Out of a total of 18 players who were drafted to undergo month-long trials with the 16 PSL teams, only three managed to finally live their dreams.

Left-back Bongani Sam was snapped up by Bloemfontein Celtic, but loaned out to National First Division (NFD) side Highlands Park, while centre-back Kamogelo Mogotlane, who captained the Ke Yona team, is on Cape Town City's books.

After initially undertaking a trial with Orlando Pirates, goalkeeper Mduduzi Khumalo finally landed a contract with Free State Stars.

One of the Ke Yona's coaches, Owen Da Gama, was ecstatic about their achievements.

The Highlands Park coach was upbeat about the contribution the campaign has made.

"It is unbelievable what this Ke Yona project has done.

"It has changed people's lives," said the former Bafana Bafana assistant coach.

He said there were more than 20

players playing in the lower leagues who were discovered through this talent search.

Some players who are currently campaigning in the NFD are Ian "Chukwu" Chikoitwa and Kyle Davis, who both play for the University of Pretoria.

Others are Bongani Mbuli of Bidvest Wits, who was loaned out to Super Eagles, and Recardo Vesuur, who plays for the same club.

The talented players were identified through the annual campaign, which is in its fifth year this year.

The search, which sorted through more than 13 000 hopefuls over seven months, concluded with 18 players, who formed a team that played against Nedbank champions SuperSport United.

Mogotlane told City Press that he was looking to impress at City, where he had signed a one-and-a-half year contract.

He will be fighting for the starting berth with the likes of Robyn Johannes, Taariq Fielies and Edmilson Dove.

The Mpumalanga-born defender said he would not be fighting directly for a position, but was prepared to learn from the more experienced campaigners.

Other coaches involved in this programme are Khabo Zondo, Ephraim "Shakes" Mashaba and Mike Mangena.

