



# Palmer all fired up to take up cudgels in Bucks campaign

## SOCCER

By MFUNDO PILISO

MTHATHA Bucks hope to kickstart their National First Division campaign on a high when they take on University of Pretoria tomorrow at the Tuks Stadium in Pretoria.

Having brought experienced players like Richard Mkhize (Orlando Pirates), Shane Thompson (Jomo Cosmos), Shane April (Bloem Celtic) together with potential PSL stars like Mpho Khumalo (Kaizer Chiefs development) and the talented young gun Mpho Erasmus (Zizwe United) Bucks head coach Ian Palmer was looking forward to challenging for that elusive playoff spot.

"If you look at the quality we've brought on board as well, it's not bad quality and if you check where they trained which is Cosmos, Sundowns, and Pirates it's impressive.

"We have Bongani Kama who is quality – better than what we had last year."

He said his new players like former Chippa United defender Pentjie Zulu had strengthened his side.

"I'm confident that we have a good quality team. If you have players on the bench or injuries you must know whoever you bring in will perform.

"We hope we will have a good start against Tuks tomorrow."

Although seemingly happy with the squad he has assembled for the upcoming season, Palmer bemoaned the fact they had lost a number of players to bigger teams whose pay was much higher than what they can afford.

"Some of them have gone to PSL clubs including Free State Stars and Bloem Celtic because we can't compete with the salaries at PSL, and we also lost Mncube, he too went for the big package at Royal Eagles.

"So fortunately we are in a situation where the chairman is doing his best to make resources available to us."

Palmer felt one of his old players Siya Mngoma, who used to play at AmaTuks, won't be helpful to Amatholamnyama with any inside information because of the new management at the helm of the students.

"The last time Siya played they had a completely new team and they have also made a lot of changes to their squad like the other teams in the league," said Palmer.

He said the two weeks he's had with the new squad was not much time to prepare for their first game but he was going to make the best out of it.

"What I'm hoping for is that they gel quickly because they will have regular players like Mashale 'Masha' Rantabane who's also starting.

"We have about new seven players starting and I'm very confident going into this game that they will do well and we will do our utmost best for our supporters here at home."

Amatholamnyama finished the 2016-17 season in eighth position and no doubt will want to aim higher this time as they look to qualify for promotional playoffs as the club's general manager Luxolo Matikinea said earlier this week.

They face Tshakhuma Tsha Madzivhandila at home at Mthatha Stadium on August 27.

