



Sammy signs for FS Stars

Club hopes journeyman Troughton can keep them in the top flight

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FREE State Stars have appointed Sammy Troughton, pictured, as new coach and believe the well-travelled former Mpumalanga Black Aces, University of Pretoria and Stellenbosch FC mentor will help them in their pursuit for stability as they expect yet another fight for survival during the upcoming 2017/18 Premier League season.

Troughton quit his job at National First Division side Stellenbosch last month, having missed out on promotion, beaten to the punch by Baroka FC, who finished top of the promotion play-off mini-league, which also included Black Leopards, to retain their topflight status.

"Look at his track record and tell me if he isn't the right fit for this club. In Sammy we have an experienced coach that can make sure Stars is stable in the new season. We are being honest with ourselves and looking at survival," said Ea Lla Koto boss Rantsi Mokoena.

"He has never relegated a team he worked with and for years at the University of Pretoria the team was steady, even when they kept selling players to the bigger clubs.

"A lot of people might not know this, but Sammy has worked at Stars before and we enjoyed him being here. Sure, he admitted he didn't see this coming, but was happy to take up the challenge and knows that the margins for error in the Premier League are even smaller than in the NFD."

Stars were reportedly chasing another NFD coach several weeks ago in Jean Lusciuto, the Belgian who, like Troughton, came close to guiding Leopards back to the Premier League.

Mokoena would not be drawn into discussing Stars' interest in Lusciuto, arguing



that the club has never said they were keen in bringing him to Bethlehem.

Troughton will start his new job almost immediately with the players soon in pre-season ahead of the beginning of a fresh campaign next month.

It will be a tough task for the 53-year-old, seeing that Stars were up against it from the first kick of the ball last year under then French-born coach Denis Lavagne, who was sacked after three matches and replaced by Giovanni Solinas, but was also sent packing four months down the line, with Serame Letsoaka taking over.

Like his predecessors, Letsoaka did not have much of an impact, although the club survived relegation on the final day of the season – only thanks to a superior goal difference.

It is that close shave with the chop that did not convince Mokoena, and Letsoaka's contract was not renewed at the end of the campaign.

"We are confident that Sammy can keep us up. He knows the culture and football in this country and is a workaholic. Some people might say it's a risk, but we think it is a calculated risk as we have brought in someone quite knowledgeable and will be a good fit for us and we have Sly (assistant coach) already here and they know each other very well," said Mokoena.

Selaotse "Sly" Mosala was hired last month while the search for a head coach was on going.

Troughton, who worked with Mosala at the University of Pretoria, should be in the dugout when Stars play in the annual Bokone Bophirima Maize Cup in Orkney on July 15 against Kaizer Chiefs, Platinum Stars and Botswana's Township Rollers.

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