



PSL newcomers



It's sink or swim for new coaches

The level of coaching experience in the Premier Soccer League (PSL) next season ranges from one extreme to another.

Four coaches - Benni McCarthy, Peter Butler, Veselin Jelušić and Joey Antipas - are set to take charge of their sides for the first time in the top flight, while Fadlu Davids and Bernard Molekwa have graduated from assistant coach to the top job.

Then there is Sammy Troughton, who has made a return to the Premiership after resurfacing at Free State Stars. He was previously with Mpumalanga Black Aces and the University of Pretoria, and is not new to this environment after having been part of Stars' technical team about a decade ago.

All eyes will be on former Bafana Bafana striker McCarthy as he takes on his first managerial job. Davids and Molekwa will head Maritzburg United and Polokwane City, respectively. This is after they guided the clubs to top-eight finishes after taking over the reins in the latter stages of the last campaign.

Antipas (Amazulu)

His position was uncertain after Amazulu failed to gain promotion when they finished fifth in the National First Division, but he has had a stay of execution. After the club bought Thanda Royal Zulu's status, Antipas should brace himself for a challenge made harder by the fact that his bosses spent millions for a place in the Premiership. The Zimbabwean will be hoping for a better outing this time. He could, however, face an early battle to keep his job if he fails to deliver in the beginning stages of the season.

Molekwa (Polokwane City)

He got a taste of what to expect when he was thrown into the deep end following the departure of Belgian Luc Eymael in March. However, being a caretaker coach and a full-time mentor are two different things. He will have to convince those who saw potential in him that he is more than capable of leading. For him to survive, he will need the backing of senior players and management to ease the pressure. At 40, he has a long future ahead of him and this is the perfect platform to nurture his coaching talent.

McCarthy (Cape Town City)

His appointment is regarded as a gamble by many because of his lack of coaching experience. But sometimes PSL experience is not the only way to go - much will depend on how players respond to his coaching philosophy. Having played at the highest level in England, Spain and Portugal, the former Bafana Bafana striker has a wealth of experience and all he needs to do is impart his knowledge to the players. It might take some time before he makes his mark, but he has what it takes to succeed. Following Cape Town City's third place finish and their triumph in the Telkom Knockout, expectations will be high for McCarthy.

Jelušić (Bloemfontein Celtic)

The Serb comes with vast knowledge of southern African football after working in Botswana and Angola. But while he might have some knowledge of South African football, experiencing it first-hand will be another story. Taking over a side that was the lowest scoring last season with 16 goals - and one that hovered in the relegation zone until the last round of fixtures - is a big task. But he sounds positive, and seems confident that he will survive and turn Sivelele's fortunes around.

Butler (Platinum Stars)

Eyebrows were raised at Butler's move from Botswana to the PSL. In 2015, the Englishman criticised the quality of football in the PSL when he was still coaching Botswana's national team. But that was then - now, he has a chance to improve the quality of the league after joining Platinum Stars. But his comments have put him on the back foot and he must prove he was wrong.

Davids (Maritzburg United)

After coming to the rescue when United looked like they were in trouble following the departure of Roger De Sá last season, the former player has to repay management - and all those who called for him to be given the job - for their confidence in him. Davids guided United to a top-eight finish and he will be looking for similar or even better results. He must have learnt a lot from German Ernst Middendorp and De Sá, and should be in a good position to go it alone. - **Timothy Molobi**

