



Peter Raath: Considering that Ezenkosi owner, Dr Ephraim 'Jomo' Sono, rates you very highly, please tell us a bit about your footballing background.

Sicelo Mkhize: I started playing soccer in the dusty streets of Hammarisdale, KZN, at the very early age of six or seven before joining amateurs, Junior Aces. They had good coaches and structures, where I learnt lots about the game. I was then sent to AmaZulu juniors, but after one season, they sold me to Real Kings, whom I helped win promotion from the ABC Motsepe League. Bra Tebza Moloi, my mentor and Nsu Ngidi, scouted me playing in a tournament called the Salga games and I haven't looked back since. The two of them are always together at these types of tournaments looking for players, ha, ha...

PR: Wasn't Moloi supposed to have taken you for a trial at an overseas club?

SM: I don't know if it will still happen or where I might go because coach Sono (Bra J) is talking more with him regarding the issue. What I do know is that people are impressed with my speed. It comes naturally, although I do extra training on my own in order to become sharper on the ball. I've always liked fast moves and fell in love with Sibusiso 'Rhee' Zuma's speed after watching my hometown boy and SA legend. I'm a player who enjoys taking opponents on and playing one-two with my teammates, and model my game on Real Madrid's Cristiano Ronaldo and Eden Hazard of Chelsea. Here in SA, I like Percy Tau, Gabadinho Mhango and Mahlambi Phakamani. I'm encouraged by the way they take players on and can't wait to one day team up with Tau and Mahlambi in the national team to kill opponents.

PR: That sounds interesting. Have any of the national team coaches shown an interest in you?



NATIONAL FIRST DIVISION FOCUS

I love this team



Jomo Cosmos' talented attacking midfielder, Sicelo Mkhize, talks openly to Soccer Laduma's Peter Raath about scoring on his debut. He also discusses Dr Sono, Sibusiso Zuma and team mates.

SM: Yes, Peter. Last season when I was at Kings, Bafana Bafana assistant coach, Thabo Senong, did speak to Simo Dladla but now all the communication will be with Bra J. I'm just focusing on playing and doing well for Cosmos. I regard myself as very fortunate and honoured at my age to play for a very knowledgeable legend like Dr Sono. At

first, I was so intimidated by his presence before realising what a humble and easy-going person he actually is. Everyone knows what Bra J has done in football. He said to me that he wouldn't change who I am and that I must play the way I always have. But obviously as a good coach, he'll teach me the most important things in football, which

will take my career very far. The way things are done here is totally different to what I've seen before, so that'll encourage and make me push more. Everything boils down to hard work and teamwork.

PR: After scoring on your debut when Cosmos thrashed University of Pretoria 5-0, how did it feel

to then lose to Tshakhuma Tsha Madzivhandila FC?

SM: Eish... Peter, it was so painful after that nice win against Tuks. Sometimes football's not fair. We outplayed TTM, but they got one chance, which came from our mistake and scored the winner. Bra J surprised me by saying that these things do happen and we must learn from them. The funny thing is that he was not angry but relaxed, which made me want the next game to come quickly in order to repay the faith he has in me. At least, I'd already introduced myself to the Cosmos' supporters by scoring against AmaTuks. Cosmos' senior players such as Mxolisi Macuphu and Clifford Mulenga have spoken to us about the importance of being consistent. They always tell me that I must attack and go inside the box, which has already paid off, as we beat Richards Bay 1-0 with my shot which was deflected into the net as an own goal. Here at Cosmos, Bra J and his technical team emphasize teamwork with individual brilliance. I can't comment on our 1-1 away draw with Ubuntu Cape Town, as I only came on as a substitute in the final five minutes. But many goals are coming. Wait for Tebogo 'Messi' Tlolane and Matsilele Sono Junior to come back from injury, then you will see.

PR: Finally, what's Sono Junior actually like as a person?

SM: Matsilele's a very good guy. He's funny like any other player and likes to give advice where necessary. We get along very well because Matsi cares a lot and is always there for me. Eish... honestly, I'm so happy to be here. I love this team. Everyone gave me a nice welcome, as it's my first time in Jozi away from my KZN home.

PR: Thanks, Sicelo, and good luck with your career.

SM: Thanks, Peter. I thought our 1-1 home draw with Uthongathi FC was a great game. It's just unfortunate that we didn't win. □

THE LATEST NFD NEWS

- Real Kings striker, Muzikayifane Ngidi, formerly with Polokwane City, spent a night in hospital following a car accident. "He was in the passenger's seat when two cars collided, but is now okay," a source told Soccer Laduma.
- Cape Town All Stars' plans to return to Parow Park have been dashed by the PSL hierarchy, which means more pressure on the Athlone Stadium's groundsman. "The pitch isn't up to scratch, while the referees' change room doesn't comply," said a PSL source.
- A few of the early ABC Motsepe League frontrunners gunning for promotion into the NFD include

- The Magic, Ikapa Sporting (Western Cape), Mthatha City, Tornado FC (Eastern Cape), Alexandra United, Maccabi FC, Baberwa FC (Gauteng), Ndengeza FC (Limpopo) and TS Sporting FC (Mpumalanga).
- Highlands Park are expecting lots from their new attacking midfielder, Suhayl Allie, who made his debut as a substitute during a 2-1 home defeat to Tshakhuma Tsha Madzivhandila FC. "We signed him for what he offers. His goal-scoring ability is really good. Suhayl netted four crackers in two friendlies, so I think he'll blossom, but it's up to him," said a source.
- Jomo Cosmos star attacking

- midfielder, Sicelo Mkhize, has revealed that his teammates hate losing. "This especially applies to Clifford Mulenga and Mmiseni Ndlovu. Even at training and at the clubhouse, Ndlovu will talk about it by saying 'sobashaya nakanjani, siyabafuna manje (we will beat them no matter what, we want them now)'," he said.
- NFD Rookies, Ubuntu Cape Town, continue to be one of the worst offenders when it comes to unsporting behaviour. Roger Links' team picked up 13 yellow cards in clashes against Stellenbosch FC, Black Leopards, Real Kings and Jomo Cosmos.

