



# Local giants are stirring and that is a good sign

**I**t was a good Nedbank Cup first round for the Absa Premiership teams as most of them progressed to the next round. Most of the teams scored a number of goals, especially Kaizer Chiefs, who beat Golden Arrows 3-0. I can't recall the last time *Amakhosi* won a game by such a margin and in such an emphatic style.

That was great to see and I believe it will revive the spirit of football, as we don't have the likes of SuperSport United and Bidvest Wits who have been dominating cup competitions recently.

The giants have woken up, and

that is good for South African football. Not that the other teams are not important, but once our so-called big teams do well, it increases the profile of the tournament and our football at large.

As much as this tournament has financial incentives for the smaller teams as they progress, I believe that at this present moment it is not about the money but all about the exposure for the lower division players and the showcasing of their talent on this platform.

To those teams that have been eliminated, my message to them is that they must be proud of them-

selves, they need to go back to the drawing board, regroup and use that experience to advance their ambitions in their respective leagues and look to come back stronger in next season's edition.

We have seen in the past the likes of Baroka FC, Chippa United and University of Pretoria making their name in the Nedbank Cup. They went on to perform consistently in the competition and it boosted their bids to win promotion into the top flight.

It was also nice to see Swallows FC giving Maritzburg United a tough time. When I watched Swallows, it brought back all of the memories of the Moroka Swallows of old, so I say this round of the Nedbank Cup has been a very good revival of our football.

On the part of the now eliminated champions SuperSport United, I feel that with them bowing out

of the tournament is a blessing in disguise as they will focus on the league. I doubt Eric Tinkler was deliberate in his approach to deploy youngsters.

I think clubs have begun to find a balance and understand the demands of modern football whereby some players are dominant and consistent when it comes to playing in the league, while others are used to the cup competitions.

Our teams are starting to adapt to that and I personally feel it is a brilliant move whereby coaches are starting to introduce young players in such high-profile games.

This can only boost the confidence of the young players and it helps them harness their skills and aids in terms of adjusting to the pressures of playing at the top level.

I hope and believe Tinkler

didn't bring in youngsters with the intention of not proceeding to the next round. If that was the intention, I strongly condemn it. I hope the idea was to bring in youngsters in order to get experience and exposure to boost their confidence, because we must remember that some youngsters suffer from stage fright.

I was also very pleased when I looked at Orlando Pirates and the way they performed. Some of the players who coach Milutin Sredojevic fielded are players who don't feature regularly in the first team.

However, the right attitude was displayed and they did not deviate from their usual game plan, and for that, Pirates' technical team needs to be applauded.

It takes a lot of work to incorporate fringe players into the team and still manage to keep the momentum going.

