



PETER SHALULILE
Picture: Backpagepix

Da Gama has the champagne on ice

HIGHLANDS PARK: LEADERS NEED A POINT TO CLINCH TITLE

Sibongiseni Gumbi

Highlands Park have won the National First Division title and are back in the Absa Premiership – well, almost.

It now looks impossible that any team can knock the Lions of the North off the top with Black Leopards and Real Kings the only teams with a mathematical chance of pulling the rug from under Owen da Gama's feet.

For that to happen, however, Leopards and Kings will not only have to win their remaining games but will have to do so with huge wins – and all the while Da Gama's side would have to lose all of theirs. Highlands are 15 points ahead of Leopards with 15 points left to play for this season. Kings

have a game in hand which they will play against Ubuntu Cape Town this afternoon. Either way, Highlands Park can wrap up the title with just a point at home to the University of Pretoria on Saturday.

Da Gama's side are on a run of 19 matches in the NFD without defeat. If their comprehensive 4-0 beating of Tshakhuma Tsha Madzivhandila this weekend wasn't a clear enough message that they are in mean mode, nothing will be. Mthobeni Mvala, Sphile Mahlangu, Sabelo Nyembe and Peter Shalulile got the goals for the in-form leaders.

Da Gama is not ready to celebrate yet and although he feels they have done enough, he would take each game as it comes and not think about the title.

In reality, all the likes of Leopards, Kings, Jomo Cosmos and

to some extent Witbank Spurs, Tshakhuma and Cape Town All Stars can fight for now is a place in the play-offs. *Lidoda Duvha* made their intentions of making the play-offs clear as they ended Stellenbosch FC's chances with a 3-1 beating in Thohoyandou on Sunday afternoon.

Kings play Ubuntu, who were involved in a Nedbank Cup match at the weekend, this afternoon while Cosmos scored an important 4-2 victory over Richards Bay to keep their play-off chances alive.

Siyavutha, Tshakhuma and *IguguleKapa* have an outside chance in the fight for the play-offs spot. Mthatha Bucks are meanwhile a good bet for relegation. The only Eastern Cape NFD side are now seven points adrift at the foot of the table and their chances of survival are almost non-existent.

