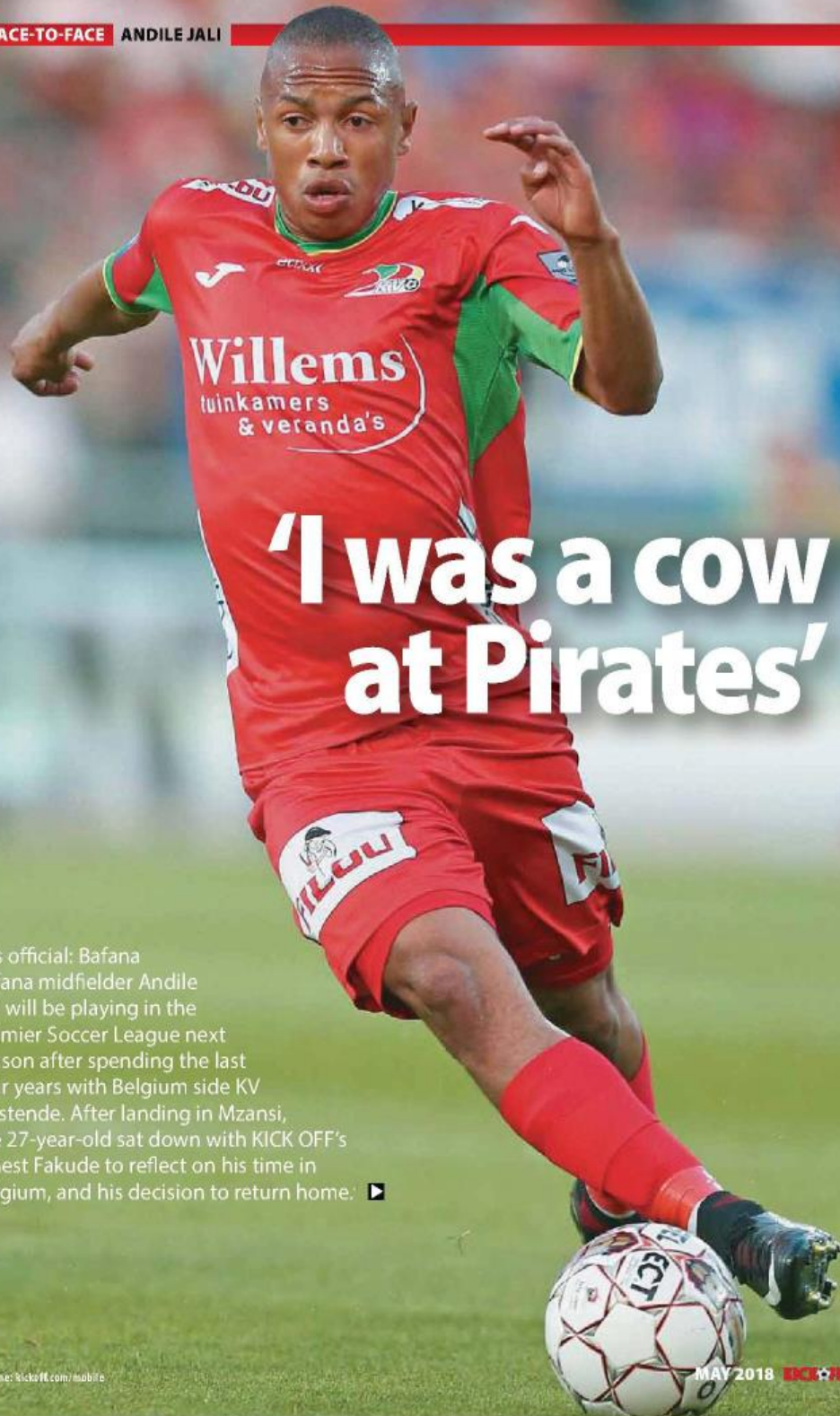




FACE-TO-FACE ANDILE JALI



'I was a cow at Pirates'

It is official: Bafana Bafana midfielder Andile Jali will be playing in the Premier Soccer League next season after spending the last four years with Belgium side KV Oostende. After landing in Mzansi, the 27-year-old sat down with KICK OFF's Ernest Fakude to reflect on his time in Belgium, and his decision to return home: ▶

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FACE-TO-FACE **ANDILE JALI**

KICK OFF: Thank you for your time Andile. You have already announced that you are coming back ...

ANDILE JALI: Yes, I am coming back. I said that before. But I am coming back for my family, and not because I am desperate.

How would you describe your stay at Oostende?

It was good, I can't complain. The club treated me well, from the management and the technical team right through to the supporters – everyone was good to me. The management was always there for me, taking care of me both on and off the field. The supporters are so passionate and loyal to the club. In Europe you feel it when you play



“WHEN I AM HERE WITH BAFANA BAFANA I PLAY DIFFERENTLY TO WHEN I AM WITH MY CLUB TEAM.”

away and when you play at home – there is a huge difference between the two.

What did you learn over the years you spent in Europe?

I learnt a lot of things regarding the lifestyle and how to carry yourself as a person. I learnt how to stay alone without other people, the issue of language and a lot of other things.

And what did you learn in terms of your performance on the pitch?

I learnt that it is important to understand how your teammates play. You must understand them and adapt to how they play. When I am here with Bafana Bafana I play differently to when I am with my club team, so it is important to quickly adapt to the way players play in both teams.

What kind of experience do you think you are bringing back to South Africa from Europe?

I don't know, I will see where I will be playing and only then can I comment.

Since leaving for Belgium, do you believe the kind of football being played in South Africa has changed?

Yes, it has changed. The style of play has changed. It's no longer the same as it was before.

Are people going to see a different Andile Jali in the PSL next season?

I have changed a lot – I'm a different player now. I'm no longer the same player I was before in terms of the way I

play and my style of play.

You mean changed in terms of playing defensively and offensively?

Hey, I used to mark a lot at Orlando Pirates – I was a cow at Pirates. I was doing a lot of marking, but now I play football.

Did you keep yourself updated with the happenings at Pirates since you left for Belgium?

Yes, I follow the club on Twitter, so I kept track.

Are you impressed with what they have offered on the field of play since your departure?

To be honest, I don't know how they play ... I have not really watched them play and so I don't really know.

There were great combinations with you and Oupa Manyisa during your time with the Buccaneers ...

It's not about combinations now ... yes, we had a good combination before, which was exciting, but it is finished now. Now I am looking forward and focusing on the future. I no longer look at combinations, or who I can play with or without.

You narrowly missed out on winning the CAF Champions League with Pirates, but still did well in helping the club win the double-treble. Any great memories?

By that team! Those memories will never fade. What do you want me to say? I am part of the club's history, with my name written on the wall as part of Pirates history.

WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT JALI'S RETURN

We get the low down from a former coach, teammate and fan of Andile Jali's former PSL club Orlando

AUGASTO PALACIOS (JALI'S EX-COACH AT ORLANDO PIRATES): "I've said it before – Andile Jali is one of the best midfielders in the country, and we had one of the best midfield combinations when he played alongside Oupa Manyisa. For me, it was an honour to coach him; he was very professional at the time and he is still a great

player. I don't want to compare players, but he reminded me of Benedict "Tso" Vilakazi. With or without the ball, he has the energy of a player who is trying to win a game for his team. He brings stability and balance to the team and links the defence and strikers very well. The team that will sign him will be getting a very,

very good player because he can defend and attack. In my opinion, it would have been better if he had remained overseas, but it's about family and there is nothing we can do about it. Remember when he came off the bench for Bafana Bafana, he used to change the complexion of the game. He will always be one of the best players

in South African football. He must perform the way we know and he can still contribute a lot to the national team and at club level. I have confidence in him – he has never let me down."

DINGANG MABALANE (JALI'S EX-TEAMMATE AT ORLANDO PIRATES): "It's a matter of why he is coming

back; it depends on how he looks at it. But he has always been a valuable player. I've played with him and I know what kind of a player he is. He is definitely a quality player. He left the PSL at the right time when he was at the peak of his career and I thought he was going to stay in Europe much longer, for three to four



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ABOVE: Jali is challenged by Senegal's Lamine Gassama during a World Cup Qualifier.
LEFT: Jali in action for Orlando Pirates during the Telkom Knockout final against Platinum Stars in 2013.

You worked with a number of coaches in both South Africa and Europe. Which one would you say has been your best?

I have worked with a number of coaches in the PSL and with Bafana Bafana, the likes of Pitso Mosimane, Roger de Sa, Ruud Krol and Stuart Baxter, and all are good coaches. It would be unfair to mention a specific name. Obviously each coach has his way of handling things and his own style of play. Augusto Palacios used to bring a sound system to training and that was crazy. I worked with Steve Barker at Tuks (University of Pretoria). His management skills were superb. Sammy Troughton was another great character off the field. I will always have a soft spot for Clive Barker (his

Coca-Cola Football Stars coach), as he gave me my breakthrough.

AmaTuks gave you the platform to take your career to the next level. You must still have fond memories of the club, having arrived from the rural areas to Pretoria as a youngster ...

I had a great time there. Guys like Phenyo Mongalo and Goodman Sauhatsi took care of me – I owe a lot to Goodman. The guys went above and beyond, even buying me clothes. I always looked nice in those UZZI or Levi's jeans and Cavella shoes. I am still looking for Goodman so I can do something nice for that guy. I remember when AmaTuks was fighting relegation at one stage, the club

started to offer bonuses and we started winning games. I remember having close to R40 000 in my pocket for first time in my life. After getting paid I took the next bus and went home [to Matatiele]. I hid the money in my pants, as I didn't want to make any mistakes and lose it! I then took half of that amount and gave it to my father.

Bafana Bafana are not going to the 2018 World Cup in Russia. What do you think let the team down?

There are lots of things that happened which made us not qualify for the World Cup. I can't mention them, but there are a lot. If I had power, I would say it. But now I don't have power, so I can't say anything.

Having spent time in Belgium, would you recommend that our local footballers go and play in Europe?

When you go to Europe, you must know what you are doing. If you go there and do not know your story, you will come back very quickly.

There is a notion that local players, after spending time in Europe, only return to South Africa to retire ...

I have come back here to play – I didn't come here to retire. I am coming back to play football. I have come back for my family and for football.

What do you want to achieve now that you back in South Africa?

You know, I have won a lot of things in South Africa. It's only the Champions League that is missing. I have won lot of things, but as a person you want to keep winning.

Based on your answer, it means the team you will be playing for must have ambitions of doing well in Africa?

Yes, most definitely. The team where I am going will be winning trophies. **NO**

"I HAVE COME BACK HERE TO PLAY – I DIDN'T COME HERE TO RETIRE."

Pirates, who share their thoughts on the talented midfielder's return to South Africa.

more seasons. Maybe he decided that he'd had enough. But he will definitely give us something different, depending on which team he will be joining. If this is a decision that he has already taken, then who are we to say? Maybe he feels he needs to play football in the country. But his advantage is that he has played

in the PSL and is familiar with the pace and the style of play. It will be a small adjustment and just a matter of familiarising himself with a few things. Guys like Daylon Classen and Anete Ngcongca didn't get to play in the PSL before they left, but Jali is different. It should be easy for him for adapt."

JOYCE "MAMA JOY" CHAUKE (ORLANDO PIRATES SUPPORTER)

"To tell you the honest truth, even if Jali doesn't come back to Orlando Pirates, we won't have a problem. If you look at the current squad, where is he going to play? We don't need to stress about whether he is coming back or not, when his return might destroy the spirit of the players

who are currently there. We had Siyabonga Nomvethe come back and honestly, he didn't contribute to the team and ended up leaving. The only player who came back from Europe and performed well is Benni McCarthy. He is the only one and there will never be another player like him. When Benedict Vilakazi came back, I was heart-

broken because I took to him like a brother. I expected him to come to the team and we celebrated our 70th anniversary thinking he was coming back, but when he ended up joining Mamelodi Sundowns it broke our hearts. Jali left us to go play overseas, but I don't think a return to Pirates will bring back anything, except to divide the team."

