



FEATURE NEDBANK CUP



From hopefuls to superstars

With the 11th edition of the Nedbank Cup under way, hopeful footballers from the lower leagues and fringe players from the bigger clubs will be looking to use the tournament to make a name for themselves. In the past, the likes of Andile Jali, Nigerian Emanuel Emenike, Jabulani Shongwe and Aubrey Modiba were unknown commodities before their Nedbank Cup fame. Here, KICK OFF profiles the talents who went from Nedbank Cup hopefuls to top-flight stars.

BY ZOLA DODA



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Andile Jali

"I want that player, get me that midfielder," were the words uttered by Orlando Pirates coach Ruud Krol to his bosses after he saw Andile Jali leading University of Pretoria to the 2009 Nedbank Cup Final.

Tuks' Nedbank Cup fairytale run ended in a 1-0 defeat against Moroka Swallows, but Krol didn't mind as he got his man before the beginning of the 2009/10 season.

Playing alongside the likes of Mthokozisi Yende and Phenyio Mongala, Jali was instrumental in Tuks' impressive Cup run which included wins against Jomo Cosmos, Kaizer Chiefs, Bloemfontein Celtic and Ajax Cape Town in the semi-final. The midfielder's ability to go up and down the field earned him the reputation as the engine of his team.

In 2009, Jali was part of the South African team that participated in the Under-20 World Cup played in Egypt, getting knocked out in the second round by eventual winners Ghana. His first season at Orlando Pirates was enough to earn him a place in Bafana Bafana's 2010 World Cup preliminary squad before he was ruled out due to medical reasons. "Gattuso" was also instrumental in helping the Buccaneers win back-to-back trebles – the first of which came under long-time admirer Krol.

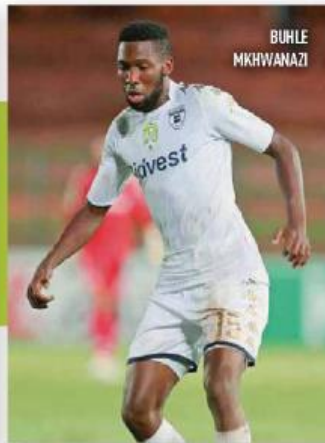
In January 2014, the now 27-year-old joined Belgium side KV Oostende where he still remains one of the club's key players.

Emanuel Emenike

Having played for West Ham in the English Premiership and Fenerbahce in Turkey, Nigerian international Emmanuel



ANDILE JALI



BUHLE MKHWANAZI

Emenike is arguably the most well-known player who played in the Nedbank Cup while with a lower league team. When Mpumalanga Black Aces reached the 2008 Nedbank Cup final before losing to Mamelodi Sundowns, the bustling striker was one of the club's key players.

Unknown at the time, Emenike joined Amazayoni in January 2008 from Nigerian side Delta Force and made his debut against Dynamos. During the 2008 final, Emenike came on as a substitute in the 37th minute for the injured Lindokuhle Mbatha (now at Highlands Park), but couldn't change his team's fortunes as Lerato Chabangu's goal won the title for The Brazilians.

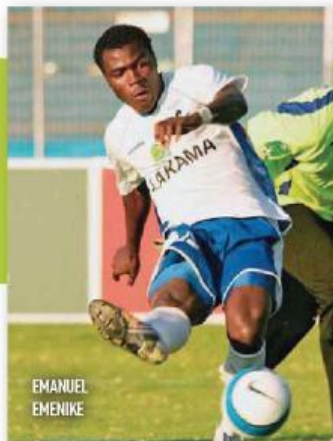
The following season, Emenike joined another First Division side FC Cape Town where he spent a solitary season. In 2009,

he moved to Turkish Second Division Karabukspor where he scored 16 league goals to help them win promotion.

Turkish giants Fenerbahce then came calling, as Emenike made the move to the Turkish capital in 2011. At Fenerbahce, he won the 2014 League and Turkish Super Cup.

Emenike's performances at club level soon caught the attention of Super Eagles, and in 2013, his four goals helped Nigeria win the Africa Cup of Nations played in South Africa. He finished the tournament as the joint-top goal scorer alongside Ghana's Wakaso Mubarak.

The 30-year-old now finds himself in La Liga with struggling Las Palmas, having secured a move from Greek club Olympiacos on January's transfer deadline day earlier this year.



EMANUEL EMENIKE



JABULANI SHONGWE

Buhle Mkhwanazi and Jabulani Shongwe

In 2010, Mamelodi Sundowns' development team Als Puk Tawana caused a major shock when they knocked PSL side Platinum Stars out of the Nedbank Cup.

Led by the young Buhlebeyeza Mkhwanazi at the back and skillful Jabulani Shongwe in midfield, Puk Tawana won the match 3-2. Shongwe scored the second of the match with Mkhwanazi putting in a solid performance, despite having his penalty saved by Tapuwa Kapini. In the following round of the competition, Tawana were dispatched 4-0 by Orlando Pirates, yet the duo had already shown future suitors what they had to offer.



NEDBANK CUP INTERESTING FACTS

A collection of interesting stats, figures and facts you may not have known about the prestigious Nedbank Cup.

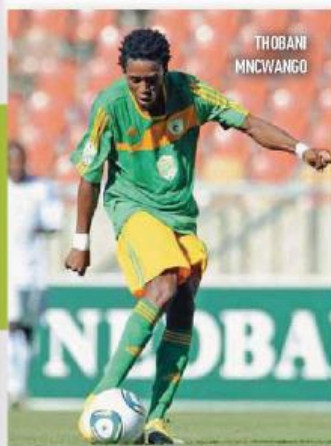
- Since its inception in 1971 as the Life Challenge Cup, Kaizer Chiefs remain the most successful team in the competition, having reached 18 finals and claiming 13 victories.
- The tournament's second-most successful club Orlando Pirates (eight victories) – who have lost the last two finals in a row – are the only club in the competition to have won three finals in succession, between 1973 and 1975. They went on to reach the 1976 and 1977 finals as well, but lost both to fierce rivals Kaizer Chiefs.
- Only 13 of the 45 finals in the tournament's history have not featured either Kaizer Chiefs or Orlando Pirates.
- Stuart Baxter is the only coach to have lifted the Nedbank Cup, under its current title, on three occasions – twice with SuperSport United (2016 and 2017), and once while head coach at Kaizer Chiefs (2013).
- Reigning champions SuperSport United have won five of their last seven Nedbank Cup finals, but will not make it a third in a row this year after losing on penalties to Bloemfontein Celtic in their Last 32 showdown.
- Eight teams have reached the final of the competition, but never lifted the trophy. AmaZulu have reached six finals, losing all six, while African Wanderers lost the final twice. Black Leopards, Free State Stars, Highlands Park, Manning Rangers, Mpumalanga Black Aces and University of Pretoria have all lost once.
- The competition's highest-scoring final was in 1973, when Orlando Pirates beat Zulu Royals 5-2, while only three finals in the competition's 47-year history have ended in goalless draws, the last being in 2015 when Mamelodi Sundowns beat Ajax Cape Town 4-3 on penalties.
- In helping SuperSport United lift the 2017 Nedbank Cup, Aubrey Modiba became the first Ke Yona team graduate to win the competition.

Shongwe and Mkhwanazi would both go on to play for the Sundowns senior team, before meeting up again at Bidvest Wits – Shongwe making the move from Chloorkop in 2013, while Mkhwanazi joined a year later after short stints at Bloemfontein Celtic and Tuks. Last season both players were in the Students' team that won the MTN8 and the Absa Premiership.

Shongwe is now at Golden Arrows while Mkhwanazi is into his fourth campaign with the Clever Boys.

Thobani Mncwango

Striker Thobani Mncwango, who recently joined Bidvest Wits, will always be remembered as the man who inflicted pain on Kaizer Chiefs when his goal helped Baroka FC overcome their more-fancied rivals 2-1



THOBANI
MNCWANGO

In their Nedbank Cup quarter-final in 2011. Then a Vodacom Second Division side, Bakgaga Ba Ga Mphahlele went into the match as underdogs before shocking Amakhosi with Mncwango the star of the show as he netted the winner on the stroke of full-time.

Mncwango then traded Baroka FC for neighbours Polokwane City, enjoying his best return during the 2015/16 season with 13 goals. He finished that season as the joint-second top scorer in the league, one goal behind eventual Golden Boot winner Collins Mbesuma. That outstanding record earned the striker a call-up to Bafana Bafana's 2016 Africa Cup of Nations qualifying squad ahead of their clash against Gambia.

Orlando Pirates were reportedly interested in the Nongoma-born player, yet the forward chose the reigning league champions instead, sealing a move to Braamfontein in January this year.

Aubrey Modiba

Unlike other players who played for lower league teams against some of the big guns in the Nedbank Cup, rising SuperSport United star Aubrey Modiba is a product of the Nedbank Ke Yona search initiative, spearheaded by Shakes Mashaba, Owen Da Gama, Khabo Zondo and Mike Mangena.

In 2014, Modiba was one of the lucky players selected for the Ke Yona Team that played against Nedbank Cup winners Orlando Pirates, and has since enjoyed an exponential rise in his career trajectory.



AUBREY
MODIBA

After joining Mpumalanga Black Aces, he made 22 appearances during the 2015/16 campaign, ending that season by claiming the PSL Young Player of the Year award, beating the likes of Free State Stars' Sello Japha and Ajax Cape Town's Rivaldo Coetzee.

As if that was not enough, a few months later he was selected for the South African Under-23 squad that competed at the 2016 Olympic Games in Brazil.

In 2017, Modiba helped Matsatsantsa reach the CAF Confederation final, having played in every single match across the Pretoria club's arduous campaign. Still in his early twenties, Modiba is already a vital member of the SuperSport team, and no doubt has a bright future to look forward to. **KO**

