



NATIONAL FIRST DIVISION FOCUS



# It's going to be war

Real Kings' defender, Kyle Davies, chats to Soccer Laduma's Peter Raath about their recent slump. He also heaps praise on their head coach, Simo Dladla, and talks about the team's ambitions.

**Peter Raath:** At round 18, Real Kings were just six points behind Highlands Park, but following consecutive home losses to Royal Eagles and Black Leopards, coupled with goalless draws against Ubuntu Cape Town and Mbombela United, the situation changed dramatically. Why the sudden slump?

**Kyle Davies:** Although Kings went in well prepared for the Eagles match, nothing fell in our favour. Too many of our guys didn't perform at their best. When it's not your day, it's not your day. Regarding Leopards, right from the start we knew it was going to be tough. They kept the ball using good passing patterns and came at us strongly in the first half. But in the second period, we turned the tables after our opponents began getting tired. We started dominating, equalised from Nkosingiphile Phewa's penalty and then I even felt that my team would get the winner. However, out of the blue, in the 89th minute, Leopards made it 2-1 with a tremendous strike from outside the box. That killed everything for us, while Ubuntu and Mbombela were also hard games. We're all disappointed, but our head coach, Simo Dladla, told us, "It's about playing with your heart, giving everything you can for the team and fighting until the very end."

**PR:** What else can you tell us about Dladla's input?

**KD:** The coach makes it very clear what he wants from the guys. Dladla is probably one of the best coaches I've played under because he's a leader. Maybe on match



KYLE DAVIES

days, Simo doesn't say much compared to at training. However, he demands excellence, with everyone performing at 100 percent. There must be no complacency. Even off the field, that man is a father-figure to the squad and says we must respect whoever wears the armband. Simo also drives the ship well. For me, our stand-in captain, Siphamandla Majola, has done a fine job. That's why Kings is amongst the top teams. All players have a goal to pull in the same direction and, for me, it's been a matter of proving to myself what I'm capable of doing - after battling at the beginning of my career!

**PR:** That's interesting. Please elaborate...

**KD:** In 2013, I was selected for the Nedbank Ke Yona team, which was the last throw of the dice as far as I was concerned. I wanted to play football so badly. My family was getting worried about what I was going to do with my life. Our Nedbank Ke Yona side managed to hold Kaizer Chiefs to a draw, before eventually losing on penalties. I can't recall anyone else who's playing professionally from that XI except Mwenya Chibwe, a goalkeeper at Platinum Stars. Maybe the others lost hope or saw it wasn't working. For me, that was a great experience, but after being signed by Orlando Pirates, things didn't work out. They loaned me out to Royal Eagles, where I hardly got game-time. I also had a short spell at University of Pretoria prior to Kings signing me as a winger, although I can play as a right or left back. That's why

I'm grateful to be where I am now. Everything happens for a reason. It's my time now. God is good.

**PR:** Returning to matters on the field, during a purple patch Phewa grabbed seven goals in five matches, while Phumelele 'Ace' Bhengu hit three.

**KD:** Phewa, our top scorer with 11 goals so far, has been clinical with his finishing. He has a nice first touch, makes decent runs and you can expect a good few more goals from him. Bhengu, who plays an important role both on and off the pitch, motivates the youngsters. With his experience, the guys pick up tips. Our fitness levels have brought us to where we are now. Everyone is super fit. Chris Kunene and Ntsako 'Never Die' Makhubela are both hard workers. They run the whole game. 'Never Die' has a very fitting name (laughing). He's similar to Chris with that physicality and endurance; a strong guy. Like Kunene and Makhubela, Phewa always gets involved. Another key motivating factor is that the number of our supporters has been increasing, which helps us lots. When we beat Stellenbosch FC at Athlone Stadium, there was a significant amount of them in the stands. I was actually surprised. They didn't stop making a noise - that's all we could hear!

**PR:** With Kings again slipping up following the 1-1 draw with AmaTuks, your chances of qualifying for the lucrative play-offs are getting slimmer and slimmer...

**KD:** I'm gutted to say the least, after AmaTuks equalised with a late penalty. When Kings went ahead with about five minutes to go, I really thought the three points were ours, after we defended so well. I now feel for the boys and the coach, as it was a great performance. It would be a huge achievement if we reached the play-offs in only our second NFD season. Each player knows that. The last two games against Mthatha Bucks and Cape Town All Stars are going to be war. We just have to fight, fight and fight to get the three points and hope other results go our way. Kings beat Bucks and Stars 1-0 in the first round, so hopefully we can do the same again.

**PR:** Thanks, Kyle. Good luck in your promotion ambitions.

**KD:** Anytime, Peter. ☐

## THE LATEST NFD NEWS

• The Gauteng ABC Motsepe League is set for an exciting climax after former leaders, Maccabi FC, dropped vital points in successive matches, first losing 1-0 to African All Stars before being held 1-1 by lowly Leruma United FC. This means that the title race could go down to the final day of the season. At round 28, frontrunners,

JDR Stars, were two points ahead of Maccabi, who had a far superior goal difference.

• NFD champions, Highlands Park, prepared well for their away game against Cape Town All Stars by overpowering third-tier side Baberwa FC. "They beat us 4-2," confirmed Baberwa boss, Joe Seanego. • A recent media report

has alleged that Alexandra Black Aces may have purchased the franchise of Stellenbosch FC. Although this rumour has been floating around the Cape Town football fraternity for some months, a source believes that the Morfou brothers, Mario and George, who own Aces, are probably looking elsewhere to get back into the professional game.

"Wait for the ABC Motsepe League Play-Offs to take place," said a source.

• While the majority of NFD clubs have so far picked up close to 50 bookings or more, three teams - Tsbak-huma Tsha Madzvhanda FC (37), Super Eagles and Real Kings (both 35) - boast the fewest yellow cards. As far as red cards are concerned, Cape Town

All Stars and Richards Bay have the worst records, with six each.

• Teenage amateur goalkeeper, Melusi 'Sqwal' Buthelezi, 19, who's kept a number of clean sheets for Durban FC, looks likely to join a professional club next season. "He's tall, handles the ball well and a former NFD coach is keen on his services," said a source.

