

LEOPARDS SHARPEN CLAWS!

Masutha doesn't need favours



By MTHOKOZISI MKHONZA
THE battle to secure the National First Division (NFD) promotion play-offs spot is going down to the wire on Sunday, with the final round of matches set to spark fireworks.

This is the round of matches where the 2017-18 NFD kings, Highlands Park, will be crowned champions, and receive their title after winning the championship with five games to spare.

Jomo Cosmos have already confirmed their berth in the play-offs having reached the magic 49 points mark, which ensured their top three finish.

Ezenkosi are holding the key to third-placed Black Leopards' entry to the promised land where they will get another chance of fighting for a return to the Absa Premiership next season.

Jomo Sono's charges will visit *Lidoda Duvha* at Limpopo's Thohoyandou Stadium in a crunch NFD fixture on Sunday (3pm).

The match is expected to attract hordes of locals who every year rally behind their village team. Leopards, who have 47 points, need a win to qualify for their fourth play-offs spot in five seasons – but it remains to be seen as they face bitter rivals in Cosmos.

A defeat for Leopards and victory for Real Kings and Witbank Spurs, who have collected 45 points each, could close down the door for the Venda-based team.

Leopards coach, Joel Masutha, said they have not

He said it wasn't over until the fat lady sings: "I still believe we will qualify in our last match against Cosmos. We don't care what Witbank Spurs and Real Kings do. The matter is in our hands. We don't need any favours from any club. We will need to do this ourselves.

"To get what we want, which is victory, we need to minimise mistakes on our part. Against Highlands Park,

we made two silly mistakes and we were punished. We need to avoid that in our remaining game. Cosmos have qualified and now the pressure is on us. Even a draw could help us, but we are going for an all out win."

In the bottom half of the table, either Ubuntu Cape Town, Super Eagles, Richards Bay FC or Uthongathi FC will be relegated to ABC Motsepe League where they will be joining Mthatha Bucks who were relegated with two games to go.

FIXTURES

SUNDAY
 Super Eagles v Mthatha Bucks (Goble Park); Uthongathi FC v Pretoria University FC (Princess Magogo Stadium); Real Kings v Cape Town All Stars (King Zwelithini Stadium); Mbombela United v Richards Bay (Kabokweni Stadium); Stellenbosch v Highlands Park (Athlone Stadium); Ubuntu Cape Town v Tshakhuma Tsha Madzivhandila (Athlone Stadium); Royal Eagles v Witbank Spurs (Harry Gwala Stadium); Black Leopards v Jomo Cosmos (Thohoyandou Stadium)
 > KICK-OFF: 3pm

NFD Logs

Pos	Team	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts
1	Highlands Park	29	20	6	3	62	13	49	66
2	Jomo Cosmos	29	14	7	8	46	32	14	49
3	Black Leopards	29	13	8	8	39	21	18	47
4	Real Kings	29	11	12	6	33	23	10	45
5	Witbank Spurs	29	11	12	6	35	29	6	45
6	Tshakhuma Tsha Madzivhandila	29	11	8	10	31	41	-10	41
7	Stellenbosch	29	10	10	9	29	33	-4	40
8	Cape Town All Stars	29	8	13	8	27	25	2	37
9	Pretoria University FC	29	9	9	11	35	45	-10	36
10	Royal Eagles	29	7	12	10	39	41	-2	33
11	Mbombela United	29	10	6	13	28	39	-11	33
12	Uthongathi FC	29	6	13	10	20	25	-5	31
13	Richards Bay	29	7	10	12	26	40	-14	31
14	Super Eagles	29	7	10	12	25	39	-14	31
15	Ubuntu Cape Town	29	6	11	12	28	37	-9	29
16	Mthatha Bucks	29	4	9	16	26	46	-20	21

NFD SCHEDULE
SUNDAY: Champions crowned
 16 May: Promotion Play-offs kick-off
 2 June Promotion Play-off last fixture

Joel Masutha is optimistic Black Leopards will qualify for the promotion play-offs.

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