



How PSL champs lay down a plan

THE MAMELODI Sundowns' trio whose job is to plan to the tee and prepare for any eventuality arrived at their destination with no clear path that they could follow.

That's why they are extremely motivated to ensure that the Brazilians' technical team and the players don't go into any war blindly just like they did when they started their careers as analysts with no framework to follow.

"Before I joined Sundowns I was studying Sport Science at the University of Pretoria and working at a DVD store after quitting Geology two years into my studies," said the Brazilians' performance analyst, Musi Matlaba said.

"Sundowns' head of analysis) Goolam Valodia was a car salesman. Mario Mash was working at his brother's fish and chip shop. We taught ourselves and developed our ways of working. When Goolam and I went to an analysis summit in Amsterdam last year, it was good to see that we are doing the same things international teams are doing. We were fortunate to be with the assistant coach of Monaco (Jose Barros) who is also their head of analysis.

"He ran us through how they do things there and it's exactly the same way we do things here. It's just that they have a bigger analysis team."

Matlaba continued, "Teams such as Manchester City have eight analysts for the first team. We don't have that luxury in South Africa. Teams are still getting to grips with the importance of having an analyst. There is nothing to study for it in South Africa. You just have to have a passion for football and you have to have a certain eye to see what we see. That eye can be worked on."

Matlaba refined his eye at Amisco. He was hired on a permanent basis two months into his three-month internship. Valodia and Mash also worked at Amisco before coming together at Sundowns. Valodia and Mash do the opposition analysis while Matlaba handles the Brazilians.

The trio then come together to complement the work done by the technical team led by coach Pitso Mosimane.

"The coach has laid down a philosophy and style of play," Matlaba said. "The philosophy has different approaches in how we attack, defend and in the transition between attack and defence. My task is to monitor that and ensure that we play according to those principles and help new players when they arrive by showing them how we play and what's required of them by the coach in the different facets of the game."

"The three of us as an analysis group also have to watch the top teams around the world and identify modern patterns and trends. There is no shame in copying something that's being done better. We believe that we have to lead in South Africa because we have access to quite a lot here."

The Brazilians are definitely leading. On Saturday they won the league for a record eighth time in the PSL-era. Three of those titles have come under Mosimane. At the heart of that success is an obsessive work ethic from Jingles who then expects everyone at the club to work as hard as he does.

"Before I came here he asked me do I understand that there are no office hours at Sundowns. We work all the time. He can send a message at 3am about something that he wants to show at training and we must have it ready in the morning."

The benefits of such detailed analysis is there for all to see.

