



Sascoc backs SA Netball's bid to host 2023 World Cup



MARK KEOHANE

THE GAUTENG Jaguars made it back to back triumphs in the Brutal Fruit Netball Premier League in a month when Netball South Africa's 2023 World Cup bid has gained momentum.

Sascoc President Gideon Sam recently endorsed the bringing of Netball's biggest global tournament to South Africa and Africa for a first time, and the response from several cities has been equally supportive.

All bids have to be formally handed in by the end of June, with New Zealand – bidding to host the World Cup for the fourth time – among South Africa's strongest challengers.

Sam said women's sport had always been a priority in South Africa.

"We believe that if we host this, netball will grow in the country. But let's be patient as this (bidding) process goes through the process. Sascoc is 120% behind the Federation."

Government sources confirmed an appetite for the country to support Netball's historic first bid.

The sources echoed Sam's view of process being adhered to, in terms of government protocols and the hosting of international events, but all indications were that the government is as committed to turning Netball's World Cup dream into a reality.

The key to any bid will be how Government and the proposed host city combine their efforts to provide financial guarantees.

Buffalo City's response to news of the bid has been immediate and the most emphatic, but from a tourism perspective it is expected Cape Town will make the most ideal host city for the two-week tournament, featuring the game's 16 best international teams.

Netball's World Cup requirement is for the tournament to be exclusive to one city.

Projections are that bringing the World Cup to South Africa would be a R2.5 billion economic cash injection, while the impact on the sport in South Africa would be massive.

Sam was insistent in advocating what hosting a World Cup of Netball would do for women's sport in South Africa.

He said the Premier League competition was also another indication of the power of sport to unite communities, in creating heroes but also in participation.

He said he would like to see his home province's Aloes (from the Eastern Cape) break the monopoly of success from up north but defending champions, the Jaguars, proved their quality in a thrilling 49-47 win against the Western Cape Southern Stings.

The Jaguars, who beat the Stings 51-43 in the first round, were always going to face a tougher challenge in the final, but the greater experience (the Jaguars were playing in their fifth final as opposed to the Stings's first ever final) proved decisive.

The scores were tied 41-41 with six minutes to go and with just 60 seconds left the scores were still tied at 47-47.

But the Jaguars produced a stunning last minute to win and keep their 2018 18-match unbeaten record.

