



Banyana star marks comeback goals

Moodaly eyes Olympic qualifier win over Botswana

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HAVING been absent from Banyana Banyana's structures in the last three years, Robyn Moodaly is banking on inspiring the team to greater heights at the second bite of the cherry.

In 2016 Moodaly lost her spot in the Banyana set-up after suffering a knee injury. Upon her recovery she moved to the University of North-western Ohio in the US where she completed her degree in sport management last year.

The 25-year-old footballer returned home and joined JYW FC late last year in order to catch the eye of Banyana's mentor Desiree Ellis.

But her timing was bad then, the national team already having done enough to qualify for their maiden World Cup, which took place in June in France.

When the dust settled, Ellis recalled Moodaly for the recent Cosafa Championships, where the former University of Pretoria's High Performance Centre player inspired South Africa to their record sixth title in seven attempts.

"With the team having qualified for the World Cup, there's high expectations," Moodaly noted. "I want to get more caps with the team because I've been away for a while but I was very delighted to get a chance to play in the Cosafa Cup. And I'm looking forward to being back in the national team, at least for a long time."

It took a team effort for Banyana to win the recent Cosafa Championships, but Moodaly dished out a woman of the match performance as her team beat Zambia 1-0 in the final at Isaac Wolfson Stadium in Port Elizabeth.

"Definitely (my confidence is on a high), especially considering the last



BANYANA Banyana player Robyn Moodaly, right, aims to cement her place in the national side. | **BACKPAGEPIX**

time I was part of the team was in 2016," she said.

Banyana will bank on the recent triumph in the regional finals to act as a morale booster when they play the first leg of the 2020 Tokyo Olympic qualifiers against Botswana tomorrow night (7pm) at Botswana National Stadium.

Botswana have already indicated

that they'll go all out when they revive their rivalry with their neighbours.

They pulled out of the Cosafa, and used the period to hold an international camp in Slovakia before assembling for a local camp on Tuesday.

"They weren't in the Cosafa Cup but they were obviously preparing," Moodaly said.

"We know how they play, but I

feel like we can come up strong and then look forward to the upcoming matches. And having camped like two weeks ago, we've fitted into the system. So, there wasn't much of a gap in our return back to the ongoing camp."

If Banyana are to qualify for their third successive Olympic Games, they'll need to make those intention clear by pulling off a polished perfor-

mance tomorrow night.

There's pressure to perform, especially with only one African team guaranteed a spot in the tournament, instead of the previous two-team qualifying format.

The African winner of the qualifiers will automatically go through, while the runner-up will face Chile in a play-off.