

# Banyana star's comeback goals

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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 Northwestern Ohio in the US where she completed her degree in sport management last year.

The 25-year-old footballer heeded the call to return home, joining JFW FC late last year in the hope of catching the eye of national team coach Desiree Ellis.

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

However, when the dust settled, Ellis recalled Moodaly for the recent Cosafa Championships in Port Elizabeth, where the former University of Pretoria's High Performance Centre player inspired the national team 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 for a long time."

It may have taken a team effort for Banyana to win their recent Cosafa Championships, but Moodaly dished out a woman of the match performance as her team defeated Zambia 1-0 in the final at the Isaac Wolfson Stadium.

"Definitely (my confidence is on a high), especially considering the last time I was part of the team was in 2016," said the attacking midfielder.

Banyana will bank on the recent triumph in the regional finals to serve as a huge morale



Robyn Moodaly | BackpagePix

booster when they play their 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 tournament, 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 this week after training.

"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 intentions clear by pulling off a polished performance tomorrow night.

Add to the fact that there's pressure to perform, especially with only one African team guaranteed a spot in the tournament. The previous qualifying format allowed two teams to advance.

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