



Now Mthembu dreams of Proteas caps

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Port Elizabeth

NETBALL was not Lungile Mthembu's first love. Her first love was cricket. The love for netball grew as the 23-year-old wing defence of Tshwane District spent more time on the court.

Mthembu, who started playing netball in Grade 10, was scouted and only then started taking the sport seriously.

This week Mthembu is in Port Elizabeth as one of the players in Jenny van Dyk's team that is playing in the Senior Section A of the Spar Women's Netball National Championships. The week-long tournament is held in Lotto Young Park Netball Courts.

Mthembu, who plays for Gauteng Jaguars as well in the Brutal Fruit Netball Premier League and Tuks in the Varsity Cup, has been exceptional for the side.

Playing in the national championships, which is one of the biggest netball tournaments in the country, means a lot for the ambitious player who'd like to see herself in Proteas colours and playing in one of the best leagues in the world one day.

"I'd love to represent my country. The advantage of being in the Proteas squad is that chances of playing overseas are high.

"Tournaments like the Brutal Fruit Netball Premier League and Spar Women's Netball National Championships give us a lot of exposure. Our coach said international coaches watch our tournaments and scout players there. We also improve our skills in these tournaments," said Mthembu.

After the disappointment of losing to Mangaung Metro, Mthembu's team managed to redeem themselves against Cape Town, beating them

60-37 and then defeating Dr Kenneth Kaunda, who are also one of the top teams, 46-29.

"I think coach wanted us to redeem ourselves because yesterday we didn't pitch for that game (against Mangaung Metro). We've had so many easy games at the start of the week. We got too relaxed and complacent because we played against these teams before. We had an idea of how they play but they lost the previous day, so they came back with a vengeance and we didn't expect that. We made silly mistakes and lost the game. When today came we had to win the game to keep ourselves in the running," said Mthembu.

Dr KK's wing defence Didintle Keebine said they will take the defeat as a lesson.

"I think we probably didn't come with the right mindset. We've learnt

something from the loss. It's just one of those days. I believe we are going to do well going forward because we've been good. This is just a lesson and we are going to do something much more greater from this," she said.

In other Senior Section A results on the fourth day, Nelson Mandela Bay won 50-45 against Gert Sibande, Dr KK (in their first match) beat Cape Winelands 45-40. Winelands also lost their second game of the day against Mangaung Metro. The Free State team beat them 21-18. Nkangala lost 47-30 to Gert Sibande.

Tshwane are currently on top of the log, followed by their arch-rivals Dr KK with Mangaung Metro third and Cape Winelands fourth.

There won't be semi-final at this year's tournament. The top two teams will play each other in the final and third and fourth teams will play for bronze.

