

South Africans determined to beat Sunshine Girls

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South Africa's senior netballers touched down at the Norman Manley International Airport yesterday afternoon, determined to get the better of Jamaica's Sunshine Girls in their three-Test Supreme Ventures Limited (SVL) Sunshine Series, set for the National Indoor Sports Centre.

June 15, 17 and 19 are the dates, as the revamped Sunshine Girls squad looks to try and add some gloss to the national netball programme against the world number six-ranked 'Proteas'.

The visitors, coached since last year by Elize Kotze, went down 72-45 at the hands of the number four-ranked Jamaicans at last year's World Netball Championships (WNC) in Singapore.

For Kotze, the series also provides an excellent opportunity for her team to cut the gap on the number four-ranked Jamaicans.

"It will definitely make a huge difference in our ranking (if we beat Jamaica). Even though we finished fifth at the World Netball Championships it didn't have that much influence on our rankings because we didn't have enough games.

"This will, however, have a big impact on our Test ranking so this is a crucial series for us," Kotze continued.

Major challenge

The coach will be banking on an experienced roster, which features eight players who participated at the WNC last year.

Experience or not, Kotze recognises that this will be a major challenge for her team and is particularly wary of the hosts' height advantage, particularly goalshooter Jhanelle Fowler. Fowler converted 21 of her 24 attempts for an 88 per cent shooting average in the teams' WNC meeting.

"We definitely have to work on neutralising the height advantage that the Jamaicans have in the circle. We have done our homework and have been analysing this team," said Kotze. "Fowler has a lot of presence in the circle with a lot of power and we have a young defender with very good elevation. In our preparations we have looked at this and we know what we have to do.

"We know that there are a few new faces (in the Jamaican team) that we don't know anything about, but we are here to compete and we want to do well. We know that the Jamaicans are very good competitors and a proud nation; so are we and we are going out there to be your best," Kotze added. The games on the 15th and the 19th will get under way at 7 p.m. while the second Test (17th) will commence at 5 p.m.

Patrons will be asked to pay \$800 for pre-sold tickets and \$900 at the gates with tickets for children, with identification, costing \$200.

SVL, a lottery company, has committed \$2 million towards the staging of the series.

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