

African Bank Limited press release

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African Bank Footy team surprises all at Metro Cup

Very much the underdogs, both in size and age, the African Bank U15 Footy team surprised all at the recent Metro Cup with their wins over the Remax Shooting Stars and provincial KZN team.

The team of 18 underprivileged youngsters competed for the first time in the prestigious tournament in KwaZulu Natal and made it through to the semi-finals where they narrowly lost to Amazulu FC by one goal.

“We are so proud of the boys,” says Kennedy Dembetembe, African Bank’s National CSI Manager. “What began five years ago as a dream to improve the lives of underprivileged children through sport has now developed into an incredibly uplifting programme and these young players are the result.”

For over 4 500 underprivileged primary school children where sport is not on offer and 500 youngsters who play football on community-based fields in the Ilembe district in KwaZulu Natal, the KZN Footy Project, supported by African Bank, is just what they need.

“We realised that this was a way to keep the kids off the street. Many of the kids come from really poor families. In fact in some schools 70% of the kids are orphans and can’t even afford to bring their own lunch to school. This project, spearheaded by such dedicated people like Kyle Crichton and ex Amazulu’s Head of Corporate Affairs & National soccer legend, Clive Barker, is a way to literally assist in bettering lives and providing learners with opportunities they would never be able to access,” says Dembetembe.

The project began with the training and mentoring of 150 teachers to be football coaches in the Coach the Coaches programme which allowed for continuous coaching and soccer throughout the year. The programme has now evolved to include five permanent trained coaches from within the area to give soccer lessons to over 5 000 children every week as well as the establishment of a community and school football league.

Kyle Crichton, owner and founder of KZN Footy, says the African Bank Footy players competed against professional club academy teams in the Metro Cup and played their hearts out - putting their bodies on the line and maintaining cool heads, exceptional on-field etiquette and an upbeat attitude.

“It has been a dream come true for many of these youngsters. Our team comprises of the best 18 players in all 25 underprivileged schools in which we run the Footy soccer development programme. These players have been training together twice a week and are

currently lying second in the Durban central soccer league.”

“They got to play against the best there is in KZN with the opportunity of being noticed by professional outfits, as there were scouts at the tournament. I believe we have some unbelievably talented players that could get offered bigger and better opportunities for the future. A special thanks also needs to be extended to coaches Joe and Razor who walked the team through every minute of the tournament and preparation for it,” adds Crichton.

After the tournament the Footy team got to enjoy a well-deserved swim on the beachfront, and some ice cream before returning to their homes knowing that they had made the semi-finals in the most competitive arena in their age group locally.

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PREPARED ON BEHALF OF AFRICAN BANK BY CATHY FINDLEY PR. CONTACT JACQUI RORKE ON JACQUI@FINDLEYPR.CO.ZA OR (011) 463-6372 WITH ANY CONSUMER PR QUERIES.

NOTE TO EDITOR

Footy’s vision is to offer EVERYONE an opportunity to play the beautiful game of football, irrespective of age, gender and skill and fitness level.

20 underprivileged Primary Schools and 5 Community Fields in the Ilembe district are involved in the “KZN Footy” programme. There are over 4500 children aged between 8 & 14 years benefitting from the soccer development programme. Schools receive an annual sponsorship from African Bank of:

- Soccer Balls
- Soccer Ball Carry Bags
- Bibs
- Cones
- Whistles
- Coaching Manuals & Folders
- First Aid Kits
- Tracksuits

The improvement seen throughout this project has been phenomenal, proving that given the means and support needed, there are some talented players & coaches right on our door step.

The 3 age groups being targeted are U/9, U/11 & U/13. Footy hosts 11 tournaments a year in and around these communities with partnerships with Spar, Amazulu FC & African Bank.