

Ground of latent talent

The Absa Premiership is teeming with players from academies other than those of professional clubs. DANIEL MOTHOWAGAE profiles those key institutions

Africa Sport Youth Development Academy

This Johannesburg-based academy is seven years old but its graduates in the paying ranks make up a team of 11 across the Absa Premiership clubs.

The recent appointment of its head coach Harold "Jazzy Queen" Legodi as Mamelodi Sundowns' assistant coach has added to the institution's list of success stories so far.

Erstwhile Orlando Pirates midfielder Dan "Dance" Maletle and Patrick Milazo are now in charge of the technical aspects of the academy.

» Who are the top players they have produced?

Pirates midfielder Oupa Manyisa is undoubtedly the most recognised in the list of the academy's regular players in the Premiership.

Other players who are enjoying regular game time are Bidvest Wits defender Patrick Phungwayo, utility player Joseph Molongoana at Platinum Stars and midfielder Mpho Makola at Free State Stars.

» What is the secret of their success?

"Our core business is education but we are able to strike a good balance between playing football and going to school," says Legodi, who is one of the founding members of the academy.

"Some of our players have been involved in the transfer of skills programmes at Manches-

ter United, Blackburn Rovers, Chelsea and Barcelona."

» What do they seem to be doing right?

Legodi says they have a manageable size across the age groups and have always had a maximum of 40 players in their stable.

A total of 30 players are studying at Boston College and Michelle Baird, a business management graduate, oversees the academic aspect of the academy's pupils.

Stars of Africa Football Academy

The brainchild of renowned development coach Farouk Khan, Stars of Africa utilises its contacts abroad to export young talent to countries such as Brazil and Sweden.

A television football analyst on the side, Khan has employed youth coaches Rafique Khan, Hillali Shabani and Norman Smith to nurture talent at the academy that has over the years accommodated former professional players who wanted to keep fit.

» Who are the top players they have produced?

Roving fullback Sibusiso Khumalo made an instant impression at Moroka Swallows in his debut season three years ago, and the 21-year-old was subsequently snapped up by Sundowns last season.

He has also represented South Africa at the 2009 Fifa Under-20 World Cup.

Wits captain Tefu Mashamaite

SA's Top Soccer Academies



Oupa Manyisa

Africa Sport Youth Development Academy

Sandringham, Johannesburg
Head coach: Dance Maletle

Graduates in the PSL:
Ntsiki Nyauza (Platinum Stars)
Thabo Moloji (Pirates)
Oupa Manyisa (Orlando Pirates)
Lehlohonolo Masalesa (Bidvest Wits)
Patrick Phungwayo (Wits)
Joseph Molongoana (Platinum Stars)
Mamadimo Masenya (Platinum Stars)
Mpho Makola (Free State Stars)
Lwazi Skosana (Moroka Swallows)
Ayanda Mtshali (Free State Stars)



Angelo Kerspuy

Stars of Africa Football Academy

Mayfair West, Johannesburg
Head coach: Farouk Khan

Graduates in the PSL:
Tefu Mashamaite (Wits)
Sibusiso Khumalo (Mamelodi Sundowns)
Angelo Kerspuy (Bloemfontein Celtic)
* Denis Kalala (Celtic)
* Kalala was born in the DRC



Coldrin Coetzee

Safa Transnet Football School of Excellence

Elandsfontein, Johannesburg
Head coach (acting): Mandla Mazibuko

Graduates in the PSL:
Sherwyn Naicker (SuperSport United)
Coldrin Coetzee (Platinum Stars)
Jabulani Shongwe (Mamelodi Sundowns)
Bongani Theletsane (Jomo Cosmos)
James Mofokeng (Platinum Stars)



Mark Mayambela

Old Mutual Academy

Pinelands, Cape Town
Head coach: Roger Links

Graduates in the PSL:
Mark Mayambela (Pirates)
Keno Shellar (SuperSport United)
Lyle Lakay (SuperSport)
Thabo Moleko (SuperSport)
Damien Mitchell (SuperSport)



Kamohelo Mabuya

Harmony Academy

Virginia, Free State
Head coach: Pitso Mokoena

Graduates in the PSL:
Kamohelo Mabuya (ex Golden Arrows)
* Keamogetse Wolff (Celtic)
* Tumelo Nhlapo (Celtic)
* Koloko Mokhethi (Celtic)
Now plying their trade in the National First Division

is another talent who was nurtured by Khan's academy and so is Angelo Kerspuy and DRC-born Denis Kalala who are both at Bloemfontein Celtic.

The academies' best export is undoubtedly May Mahlangu. The 22-year-old midfielder from Secunda in Mpumalanga is commanding a regular place at Swedish Premier League club Helsingborg IF.

Amethyst Ralani (Landskrona BoIS) and Ayanda Nkili (Hasselholm) also ply their trade in Sweden.

» What is the secret of their success?

"The secret of Stars of Africa is built on good talent identification and nurturing this talent in a systematic scientific manner," says Khan.

» What do they seem to be doing right?

Khan says constant emphasis on technical improvement and academic standards is the name of the business.

The academy's other apprentices are spread across in the Mozambican league at Costa do Sol, Desportivo Mapu-

to and Maxaquene.

Safa Transnet Football School of Excellence

The school, which is one of the oldest and most credible academies in the country, was beset by administration problems in recent years, but was still able to produce players.

School of Excellence has consistently provided players for junior national teams.

» Who are the top players they have produced?

Midfielder Coldrin Coetzee, was a regular under Steve Komphela at Platinum Stars in the 22-year-old's debut season last year.

Bongani Theletsane also enjoyed a regular run at Jomo Cosmos and caught the attention of big clubs, notably Mamelodi Sundowns.

Coetzee, like his former schoolmates Sherwyn Naicker (SuperSport United), Jabulani Shongwe (Sundowns) and James Mofokeng (Platinum Stars), are used sparingly at club level.

Theletsane is on the verge of a return to the Premiership with Cosmos.

» What is the secret of their success?

"We don't tamper with our players' talent and age," states acting head coach Mandla Mazibuko.

"Instead, we identify their weaknesses and design a programme that will enhance their true potential."

» What do they seem to be doing right?

"We are able to monitor our players around the clock because they are housed under one roof," says Mazibuko.

Old Mutual Academy

The Cape Town-based institution is headed by former Bafana Bafana and Cape Town Spurs defender Roger Links.

He is assisted by among others, former Pirates defender Kamaal Sait.

Links is one of the founding members of the academy.

He returned last year after a three-year spell at the Ajax Cape Town development structure.

He recently completed his Uefa-A licence course in Scotland.

» Who are the top players they have produced?

Pirates midfielder Mark Mayambela remains at the top of the list of the academy's products who include Keno Shellar, Lyle Lakay, Thabo Moleko and Damien Mitchell.

All these players are on the books of SuperSport United.

» What is the secret of their success?

"Our good scouting network is doing it for us," says Links.

» What do they seem to be doing right?

The academy encourages education and pays tuition fees for its students while they develop their soccer skills.

Harmony Academy

Harmony, which is in its eighth year, has provided the junior national squads with players who went on to feature in Caf and Fifa tournaments.

The academy was once headed by renowned Free State

youth coach Molefi Ntseki, who is now assistant to Clinton Larsen, coach at Bloemfontein Celtic.

» Who are the top players they have produced?

Tumelo Nhlapo was a revelation at Celtic and made the Bafana Bafana squad for the 2008 Afcon finals in Ghana.

Other products are Kamohelo Mabuya (ex-Golden Arrows) as well as former Under-23 internationals Keamogetse Wolff and Koloko Mokhethi, who both cut their professional teeth with Celtic.

» What is the secret of their success?

"The academy provides players with accommodation, education and proper nutrition to help in their development as soccer players," says Ntseki, who used to double as the house father.

» What do they seem to be doing right?

The academy continues to employ knowledgeable staff, and the latest is former Free State Stars defender Pitso Mokoena who is the head coach.