



## **Coke committed to developing young soccer talent in SA**

*The Copa Coca-Cola Football Stars and other initiatives find talent from all across the country*

Finding and developing young talent through a connection with football is a major commitment from Coca-Cola South Africa. This includes playing the game, throwing back balls during a game, running on to the field with a flag - or making an ad using football as a theme.

“We threw our talent net far and wide and found thousands of talented South Africans. We sponsor a number of programmes to enable the young to achieve their aspirations,” says Themba Nobanda, brand manager at Coca-Cola South Africa.

Copa Coca-Cola Football Stars is one such an initiative comprising 6 000 schools, which compete against each other to find aspiring soccer players. Children from these schools participate on a regional, provincial and national level. The best of these young up-and-coming players are then chosen to play for a South African Schools side. Coke works closely with the South African Schools Football Association (Sasfa) to identify and develop young talent. “Sasfa provides Copa with tournament management expertise including referees and match officials. They are a key partner in bringing this to life ,” says Nobanda.

This year the team of budding young soccer players once identified, had to compete against 14 other African teams. All players must be under 18 years old and in school. “These competitions allow talent to be identified and nurtured across Africa,” says Nobanda.

Copa Coca-Cola Football Stars has been running since 2006 and many top players have been identified through the initiative. Orlando Pirates’ Happy Jele and Kaizer Chiefs’ Mandla Masango are two such players. “Both players, who are in their early 20s, have

come through the Copa ranks and are now hugely successful young players. We are very proud of them," says Nobanda.

Mandla Masango is an attacking right winger from Mpumalanga and who has made his way up the ranks. He signed an extension of his contract with Chiefs earlier this year and is also playing for SA's under 23 squad.

Happy Jele is the 23-year old right back defender who made it into the PSL in 2006. He is hoping to become a regular for the Buccaneers next season.

Coca-Cola also has initiatives around ball and flag crews for the FIFA 2010 World Cup™. For the Ball Crew an extremely lucky group of youngsters was chosen from around the country for the FIFA World Cup™ matches, many came from the Copa ranks.

"The Ball Crew need to be good young soccer players," says Nobanda. "They need to be between the ages of 15 and 17 and be proficient soccer players. Soccer players identified through Copa provided the perfect solution to choosing ball crew."

All ball crew, a total of 896 participants, have been chosen from South African school children to participate in the FIFA 2010 World Cup™. This opportunity of a lifetime is thanks to the Youth Talent Development Initiative of Coca-Cola.

Another Coca-Cola sole and exclusive during the World Cup games is the Flag Crew. Children from all across South Africa were chosen through a number of initiatives such as radio and TV competitions to carry the flags of the competing teams on to the pitch for the Confederations Cup and FIFA World Cup™ games.

And then there is Mfundo Mkhize, a 23-year old whom Coke gave the opportunity to direct an international commercial – and he succeeded beyond all expectations.

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Side Bar:

## **Coca-Cola launches young directors commercial career**

Mfundo Mkhize loves soccer. Although he only managed to play for the C team in school this has not deterred the ambitious young 23-year-old fan. His big break came when he was chosen to direct the commercial for Coke's new Open Happiness global platform for the [2009 FIFA Confederations Cup](#).

A student of the AFDA film school, Mkhize was chosen by Coke after an extensive search to find the perfect young up-and-coming South African film maker. Coke provided Mkhize with all the support that he needed for this ambitious project. A commercials director was assigned to help him through the harder aspects of the job and Mkhize was given access to soccer icons and ambassadors.

After two long weeks of prep and 3 intensive days of shooting the advert was a major success. It has been compared to the film Shaolin Soccer and is a hugely ambitious and well-executed commercial. "Mkhize has been given all the best opportunity and support structures to become one of South Africa's top commercial directors," says Themba Nobanda, brand manager at Coca-Cola South Africa.

Mkhize now plans to document the development of the players in the Copa Coca-Cola Superstars league. Thanks to Coca-Cola a young man's dreams have come true and an amazing career has been launched.

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### **For further media information, please contact:**

Sammy Mohlaoli  
Senior Communications Manager Coca-Cola South Africa  
Tel: +27 11 644 0528 **OR** 0800 11 25 28  
Fax: +27 11 644 0766  
Mobile: +27 79 525 6934  
E-mail: [smohlaoli@afri.co.za](mailto:smohlaoli@afri.co.za)

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The Coca-Cola Company is the world's largest beverage company, refreshing consumers with nearly 500 sparkling and still brands. Along with Coca-Cola, recognized as the world's most valuable brand, the Company's portfolio includes 12 other billion dollar brands, including Diet Coke, Fanta, Sprite, Coca-Cola Zero, vitaminwater, POWERADE, Minute Maid and Georgia Coffee. Globally, we are the No. 1 provider of sparkling beverages, juices and juice drinks and ready-to-drink teas and coffees. Through the world's largest beverage distribution system, consumers in more than 200 countries enjoy the Company's beverages at a rate of nearly 1.6 billion servings a day. With an enduring commitment to building sustainable communities, our Company is focused on initiatives that protect the environment, conserve resources and enhance the economic development of the

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