

# The Power of Sport: Ziyawa uMfolozi Under-14 Soccer Challenge

April-May 2025



This event is very good for communities, especially the youth, as it takes them away from crime, drugs, and other social ills plaguing their surroundings. Thank you, Bidvest, for doing this. You are not only contributing to individuals but also to the country, the communities, and future leaders,' applauded Dr. Mandla Zembe, Head of Security at Richards Bay Minerals, after the final of the 2025 edition of the Ziyawa uMfolozi Under-14 Soccer Challenge.



It was cold and wet at the Mzingazi Sports Grounds on Friday, 28 March 2025. Only the grazing cows seemed unbothered by the rain. Nonetheless, Doctor Mabila, the inspiring leader of Youthzones, was determined that the launch of the event would go ahead. Branded soccer kits were hastily placed under drenched gazebos, ready to be handed out to 600 young soccer players making up 40 teams.

Teams came from across the broader uMfolozi/Richards Bay region, including Nzalabantu, Ntobozi, Thandaza, Ezonza, Jamela, Tshingimpisi, Kamela, and Kwashibilika. Some of the more exotic team names included: 16 Bullets FC, Avengers Mob FC, and Mdu's Men's Field United FC.



Shortly after receiving their soccer kits, the teams were ready for their official photo sessions. Wearing their unique logos and colours, the players were eager to compete for the winner's trophy. Saturday, 29 March 2025, set the back-to-back knockout games in motion for the rest of the week, with the final taking place on Wednesday, 2 April 2025.

Light City FC walked away with the trophy, after beating Golden City in the final match. A team of selected star players from the uMfolozi Ziyawa Under-14 Soccer Challenge will participate in the annual Ziyawa Under-14 Soccer Championship, held at the Gijima Training Academy.



The Ziyawa Soccer Championship is more than a tournament—it is an annual event, preceded by a coaches' training session and team-building activities. It is also an empowering initiative that exposes young soccer players to a wide variety of experiences and activities focused on positive social change, career guidance, soccer skills improvement, fun, and much more. Youthzones, the organizers of the event, use sport as a tool for their comprehensive development programme, including computer literacy, employability, and life skills.



Positive role modelling is integral to the comprehensive and integrated practical approach towards making a sustainable, positive impact in the communities in which Bidvest Protea Coin operates.

This role modelling is embedded in the Gijima Sport initiatives as well as in skills development.

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Through the partnership with Youthzones, numerous South African soccer stars have given their time to attend, play, support, and transfer their skills at the various sport events. For example, a star-studded team played at the Ziyawa Soccer Championship in 2024 and conducted skills clinics with 150 under-14 soccer players. Many others have attended the Ziyawa Under-14 Soccer Challenges, including Mbongeni Mzimela—current goalkeeper and coach of Richards Bay FC, who has previously represented, amongst others, Bafana Bafana, Chippa United, Platinum Stars, Amazulu and TTM—and Ngcebo Zulu—a player for Nathi Lions, who attended this year's uMfolozi Ziyawa Under-14 Challenge.



**MBONGENI MZIMELA**

In addition, this year saw the launch of the Gijima Training Academy's sport and security focused internship prioritising three team sports: soccer, cricket, and netball. Individuals showing real promise in their selected sport were given the opportunity to improve their sport skills while studying and gaining experience within the security industry. This internship helps create role models from disadvantaged communities, such as those from the uMfolozi region. An exemplary figure is Muzivukile Hlatshwayo, hailing from Mzingazi. He is a left winger who played for Current Christian City FC last year. Muzivukile is one of the promising players who has been part of the internship programme at the Gijima Training Academy since January. Thus far, he has completed multiple courses, including his PSIRA Grade training, first aid, and events security, gaining practical experience by working at events like the Pretoria Fees.



**MAXWELL**

**MUZIVUKILE**

Another youth-empowering programme is the General Security Practices learnership, which accommodated a group of 20 individuals shortly after the uMfolozi Ziyawa Soccer Challenge. The previously unemployed youth, between the ages of 18 and 28, were transported from communities such as Esikhawini, Mpangeni, Emandeni, and Kwambonambi to the Gijima Training Academy, with Bidvest Protea Coin providing transport. Maxwell Msibisi from Kwambonbi is one of those selected. These learners will hopefully go on to inspire the youth in their communities and become the leaders of tomorrow, offering real hope to others from similar backgrounds.