



Press Release

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LESOTHO COACH Q&A FOR 2011 Metropolitan COSAFA Under-20 Youth Championships

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Lesotho coach MOSES MALIEHE says his side have targeted trophy success at the 2011 Metropolitan COSAFA Under-20 Youth Championships but cautions they will face a battle in what is a difficult pool.

Maliehe's side have been drawn in the three-team Group B along with Malawi and Seychelles, and although they are buoyed by their recent successes, which have included a trip to the 2011 African Youth Championships, the coach says there is much work to be done to reach the semifinals.

Tell us a little bit about your background, for those who may not know ...

I played for the Lesotho national team and in the local league here for much of my career. I also played under [former South Africa coach] Shakes Mashaba in South Africa at Vaal Reef Stars and really enjoyed myself a lot there. I was assistant coach to Leslie Notsi with the Lesotho side that competed at the 2010 COSAFA Under-20s.

Is this a totally new squad from the one that reached the African Youth Championships and played at the 2010 Metropolitan COSAFA Under-20 Youth Championships in Botswana last year?

No, it is not totally new, obviously some players from the last 18 months are no longer eligible, but the majority remain so this is very much a 'carry-over' squad from the side that we have had in the last while.

How have your preparations gone to date and what will you be doing between now and the start of the 2011 Metropolitan COSAFA Under-20 Youth Championships on December 1?

Our preparations have been disrupted somewhat because our players are writing exams at the moment, so for now we are just waiting for the close of school. We did have a winter camp that went very well. We will also be taking on Swaziland in a friendly fixture prior to the tournament in Botswana and play a game in South Africa

too on our way to the Championships. I think by the time we get to the tournament we will be ready.

Do many of your players represent Lesotho Premier League clubs?

Not as many as we have had in the last 18 months, no. The team that went to the African Youth Championships, I would say that 99 percent of those players played in the Premier League here. With this squad that we are looking at, that number is probably closer to 70 percent. But that is still not a bad figure for this age-group.

What has been the strength of Lesotho junior football over the past few years?

We obviously have talent here, you cannot get as far as we have done over the last while without that. But I think we also have a highly-motivated group of players. They want to make a career out of football, perhaps other opportunities are limited, and they know that they will get noticed at tournaments such as the African Youth Championships and the COSAFA Under-20 competition. They really want to play for the Under-20 national side, unlike, perhaps, some of the players in the senior team. That makes a difference when you have players who go out there to fight for every ball. Enthusiasm is not enough on its own, but still plays a big role.

How far do you think you can go in the 2011 Metropolitan COSAFA Under-20 Youth Championships?

Our intentions are certainly to win the competition, you have to go there with that mindset. Especially as we qualified from our region for the African Youth Championships which means we should be one of the best teams in COSAFA. But we face a difficult challenge, obviously. I thought we played very well last year, but then we did not make the semifinals, which shows you how difficult this competition is. We have Malawi and Seychelles which will be hard games. We do not have a great record against Malawi in the past and that is something we would need to change. People are saying our group is easy, but I really don't think so. First aim is therefore to reach the semifinals, after that ... we will see.

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