

SABC loses rights to live Bafana games

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Live Bafana Bafana matches are about to disappear from the SABC after pay-TV newcomers Siyaya TV won exclusive radio and television rights to all South African national football teams in a six-year broadcast deal worth R1bn.



The SABC's current deal with the South African Football Association (Safa) was worth around R45m over three years and will not be renewed when it ends in April.

Siyaya TV has secured free-to-air, pay TV, mobile and internet rights to all national football teams, including Bafana, the under-23 side, and the women's team. A 24-hour television channel named Bafana Bafana TV will be launched as part of the agreement.

A source close to the negotiations said Siyaya would probably allow SABC or e.tv to show the matches, but only after the final whistle.

Under-valued

But the radio rights will, for the first time, be subject to bidding from regional stations.

Safa CEO Dennis Mumble said the decision was taken because the Bafana property rights had been under-valued. Mumble said football was making only a tenth of what cricket and rugby received from broadcasters. He said the new deal would "bring a lot more revenue" to the association.

"It will help the association and improve the financial position of the association tremendously," said Mumble.

Siyaya TV is a 100% black-owned media consortium whose shareholders include the Bakgatla Ba Kgafela tribe in North West, TV personality Dali Tambo, South African Post Office chair Vuyo Mahlati and My Television head Aubrey Tau.

Its bouquet includes South American football, movies, children's channels, and music.

The consortium has already paid R25m to Safa and will carry the production costs of Bafana matches.

Icasa spokesman Paseka Maleka said Siyaya TV was one of five new pay-TV operators that had been granted licences in April.

SABC has lost Bafana matches? 'No way...'

The licences would be confirmed when they complied with conditions set by Icasa, he said. These included assessments of funding, research, programming content and the composition of equity ownership. They have until the end of the month to comply.

The SABC's chief operating officer, Hlaudi Motsoeneng, refused to concede that the corporation had lost Bafana matches.

"We still need to negotiate and there is no way SABC will lose the Bafana Bafana rights, there is no way," Motsoeneng said yesterday.



"This is a sport of national interest. When you take all these decisions, people should think about the country. You must think about the interests of the people first. We have a huge reach and there is no one who can match SABC.

Haudi Mtsoeneng, SABC
COO, says all sports of
national interest must 'belong'
to the SABC.

"I am not just referring to Bafana, all sports of national interest must belong to the SABC. We must regulate it, and all sports of national interest must be on the SABC."

Source: *Sunday Times*, via I-Net Bridge

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