

Makarapa goes commercial

Since Alfred Baloyi made his first Makarapa 30 years ago, to dodge flying bottles at a Kaizer Chiefs game in 1987, his custom-made safety helmets have become the headgear of choice at football matches across South Africa. Now they will be commercially available for business and fans from new premises in Wynberg, Sandton.



Baloyi ran his accidental micro-business from a tiny workshop at home in the Ga-Makausi informal settlement in Germiston, training others to help him, selling them at stadiums and taxi ranks and becoming a colourful legend in fan circles.

Several corporations are now rallying behind the former municipal bus cleaner, seizing the opportunity to support this original, genuine South African idea, which offers countless potential marketing and promotion applications in both the business and sporting worlds.

Corporate support

Growthpoint Properties has secured a suitable studio floor at an affordable rental in Chadwick Place in Wynberg, Sandton, facing on to the M1 Highways and conveniently situated opposite Innisfree Park fan zone.

"The hope is that the studio will mushroom into a colourful communal upliftment hub for a diversity of entrepreneurs," says Engelbert Binedell, director of the company's industrial portfolio.

Top soccer and sports promoter Grant Nicholls, CEO of Papadi Integrated Marketing CC, who has been supporting his old friend Baloyi for many years, often in his personal capacity, is leasing the studio through his company.

Apart from ongoing financial support, Nicholls ensured the idea was granted initial trademark protection and registered the Makarapa.com and Makarapa.co.za websites. Meanwhile, his cross-cultural knowledge has been inestimable in growing the business and getting popular brand names as diverse as Coca-Cola, FNB and MTN to embrace the brand.

WBHO, which has been instrumental in the construction of stadiums, has fitted out the factory, being thrilled to get behind a deserving, long-term sport-based national initiative. Being in construction, the company strongly identifies with safety helmets too.

Local employment, local skill



Baloyi himself is determined that his invention should create as much employment as possible and personally trains cutters, painters and artists to be part of his colourful team, but he is concerned by the copycats already outsourcing the mass production of fake Makarapas to foreign shores. "It brings no employment, no money, no skill and no hope to the people c

my country," he says. Every single Makarapa is handmade and painted.

He is also quick to mention the dedicated support of property developer and businessman Tebogo Mogashoa, who has taken on the role of non-executive chair of Makarapa Integrated Marketing.

"We know that when the cheers have faded, these will live on as a symbol of team spirit, national pride and sporting passion," says Mogashoa. "That is why we are harnessing the strength of big business to grow the brand, first during the football spectacular which this year brings, and then beyond into a proud, bright, safe and sustainable future."

Personalised Baloyi Makarapas are made to reflect your personal passion, hobby, nationality, team or company - order your original South African art today on www.Makarapa.com.

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