

COPA Coca-Cola's regional finals

The COPA Coca-Cola competition to find SA's best under-18 football school team goes into the regional final stage this week, on 23, 24 and 26 February, 2011, with matches being held in the Free State and Mpumalanga.

Approximately 60 000 footballers from 3000 schools registered for participation in the tournament. The competition started in January at Cluster level and the 224 winners will now compete in 36 regional finals with the aim of getting through to the Provincial finals. The tournament culminates in the national finals, which will be held at the Galeshewe Stadium, Kimberley from 30 March to 2 April.

Anthony Garstang, brand experience manager, Coca-Cola South Africa, said: "Coca-Cola promotes ongoing youth development through our active lifestyle platform and COPA Coca-Cola is one of the initiatives that helps us achieve our goal. We are also encouraged to assist the winning schools in enhancing the quality of their sporting and academic priorities."

Ten regional finals

There will be 10 regional finals happening this week with Mpumalanga's Bushbuckridge region starting with 14 teams. Kick-off is at 9am at the Thulamahashe Stadium, Bushbuckridge, on Wednesday, 23 February.

On Saturday, 26 February, three regions in Mpumalanga, two in the Free State and two in KwaZulu-Natal will compete and over the next few weeks regional finals will be played every weekend at various venues. The provincial finals will start as soon as all the regional finals have been completed.

Future professionals

"Over the years COPA Coca-Cola has unearthed a number of youngsters who have gone on to become professional players, including Mandla Masango of Kaizer Chiefs, Happy Jele now at Orlando Pirates, Excellent Walaza currently playing for Vasco da Gama and Andile Jali who competes for Orlando Pirates and is also a Bafana Bafana player. We expect to see scouts from all PSL Clubs at the provincial finals seeking talent to boost their teams in the future," said Garstang.