

Behind the keyboard w/ Mninawa Ntloko, SAB Sports Columnist of the Year

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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Tiso Blackstar digital sports editor, Mninawa Ntloko, was named Sports Columnist of the Year at the SAB Sports Media Awards last month, for his weekly *Business Day* column *Finding the net...*

■ How do you feel about the win?

I won't lie to you, I'm pretty chuffed! This award means a lot because my late father was this column's biggest fan, and also my biggest critic. He actually sowed the seeds of my career in journalism back home in Mthatha in the Eastern Cape.

From about the age of nine, he would come back from work, hand me the *Daily Dispatch* and tell me to read from front to back. I hated this extra homework and looked forward to weekends when the *Dispatch* was not published. Well what do you know, turns out he was on to something. My old man passed away in 2013 and this award would have made him so proud...



■ Tell us more about your weekly column?

I love writing it and I've received some rather interesting correspondence from readers in the years that I've sat behind this keyboard. I write it in a hard-hitting but mischievous tone and while some love the style, others do not find me amusing in the least.

I remember one reader was so incensed after an analysis of his favourite administrator that he penned a response and actually wished that I'd be hit by a runaway bus on my way to work the next day. Some of the language he used to make his point would have made Quentin Tarantino blush.

■ ***What do you love most about your career and sports journalism in particular?***

I grew up in Mthatha and I thought that Durban and East London, the two big coastal cities my dad would often take us to, were the opposite ends of the earth and as good as it got. Little did I know I would have a career that would take me to places I would never have dreamt of ever visiting in my lifetime. I love to travel and I've enjoyed meeting people and enjoying different cultures around the world.

■ ***Tell us a bit about your experience in the industry in general; other highlights you're particularly proud of?***

I started out as a print journalist and I've dabbled in radio and television along the way. But writing remains my true love and I have won numerous other awards from behind this keyboard. This career has been a blessing and I have got so many people to thank for helping me to get here. I still work with many of them and I learn new things every single day.

■ ***What are you most looking forward to?***

I'm really looking forward to next year because Bafana Bafana, the Springboks and the Proteas will all be on quests for glory. It's not everyday that all three national teams represent us in major tournaments in the same year and the next few months will be Christmas, Easter and Bubble Blowing Day rolled into one.

■ ***What's at the top of your to-do list?***

My colleagues Kate Henry and Lebo Nthongoa have been on my case about learning this digital programme at work. They are on my case every single morning and I've decided to finally give in. I need to get them off my back urgently and learning the bloody thing is my immediate priority.

■ ***What are you currently reading/watching/listening to for work?***

Tjoe, I consume an insane amount of sport on TV, radio, print and on social media every single day. It boggles the mind how I've managed to stay married all these years. Seriously. Hell, most of my days and nights are consumed by sports. So I read, watch and listen to anything and everything that's sports related. Spare a thought for my poor wife!

■ ***Tell us something about yourself not generally known?***

I actually got into sport by accident as I had just gone through a financial writing course when I joined *Business Day* in May 2002. I surprised former editor Peter Bruce when I asked him if I could be allowed to work in the sports department instead.

The look on his face was priceless and to this day I still chuckle when I think back to our impromptu meeting in his office. He wasn't looking for a soccer writer and tried to put me off, but he eventually gave in and here I am.

That's why personally telling him about winning this award gave me such great pleasure when I saw him at work the other day.

ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

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