

World Cup needs Bafana in the quarter-finals

By [Simangaliso Zwane](#)

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It's June 2010: Stadia... check, accommodation... check, security... check, transport... check, Bafana Bafana... well, let's just say they are still experimenting.

I think there is a particular reason why the team of the host nation gets automatic qualification to play in the FIFA World Cup. The tournament needs them. Why? The host team boosts support for the tournament.

This may not be the case for the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

And no amount of branding or marketing can replace the need for a good performance to counteract the dwindling support for the national team. Try as you may, you just can't successfully sell a below-average brand.

I hope that the South African senior national football team and administrators are mindful of the fact that their performance [or lack thereof] during the 2010 FIFA World Cup could potentially pose serious ramifications for the tournament.

The way things are going in the Bafana camp, I have a feeling that thousands of passionate South African football lovers will be left to adopt other participants in the tournament, not a very ideal situation.

How long are we going to say that the coach is still experimenting? The team has a very good blend of local and international players - most of whom are regarded as stars in their respective leagues - all that's required is to fuse the existing talent and come up with a winning team.

If Bafana fails to make it out of the group stages of the competition, the spirit and passion amongst South Africans will definitely die down and match attendance will slump, which will definitely undermine the tournament and the hard work that's being done to prepare for it.

I do not think fans will accept anything less than a quarter-final appearance from Bafana.

Most nations that have hosted a FIFA World Cup have come out firing. Some have gone as far as winning the tournament, scored silver, bronze or even fourth place.

Host France clinched the coveted trophy in 1998, co-host Republic of Korea secured fourth place in 2002 and, most recently, host Germany bagged bronze in 2006.

Once a giant of African football, Bafana has been reduced to a team only good for experimenting; what have we become? We have the facilities, we have very capable players, and even the support is still there.

It used to be that when Bafana played - anywhere in the world - the whole nation came to a standstill and rallied behind the national team. Today, even the official broadcaster would rather flight delayed broadcasts coupled with mediocre commentary and camera works. Can't say I blame them as more people watch Generations than Bafana nowadays.

I have seen clubs in township tournaments play better football than the national team! We couldn't even qualify for the 2010 African Cup of Nations in Angola.

We have become so mediocre that most people see having more ball possession as some form of victory. I have heard people saying "oh well, at least we usually have more ball possession than our opponents". Are you kidding me? If you don't score goals, you can't win games, it's as simple as that.

All is not lost, there is still some time before the tournament kicks off. The team, management and administrators can still save the seemingly sinking ship by maintaining on- and off-field discipline, professionalism, consistency and good results. That means goal, goals and more goals.

Bafana's showing at the recent Confederations Cup is proof that there is still a great deal of talent, skill and flair in the team. Let's regroup and kick butt in 2010 and beyond. This is our turf, we own this place!

And no, we don't need Benni McCarthy.

ABOUT SIMANGALISO ZWANE

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