

Mokoena expects great things



South African captain, Aaron Mokoena, believes his country can make a big impact on and off the pitch when they host the 2010 World Cup. Although South Africa was beaten 1-0 by Egypt in the Nelson Mandela Challenge Cup in London recently, Mokoena was encouraged by his side's determined display.

The versatile star, who is equally at home in defence or midfield, is convinced that Bafana Bafana has enough emerging talent, as well as experienced players like himself and Rovers team mate, Benni McCarthy, to hold their own against the world's best.

The appointment of Brazilian World Cup winner Carlos Alberto Parreira as coach from next year, will provide valuable leadership to South Africa and Mokoena is already looking forward to playing his part in 2010. He knows the opportunity to play in a World Cup on home turf is a once-in-a-lifetime experience and, despite speculation that his country may struggle to cope with hosting arguably the biggest sports event in the world, he has no doubt that the organisers will make it a success.

Mokoena said: "I'm certain we will be excellent hosts of the World Cup.

When you look at the big sporting events we have held in rugby and cricket, you can see we are capable of putting on a great tournament. There is a great determination to make sure we have one of the best World Cups of all time. We have the desire to be successful as a team as well and I'm sure we will be able to make a good impression when the World Cup comes around."

Emad Moteab's early goal was enough for African Nations Cup winners Egypt to see off a spirited South Africa at Brentford's Griffin Park. But Mokoena is already looking ahead. He knows the team must concentrate on qualifying for the 2008 African Nations Cup, because that will give them valuable tournament experience.

He said: "It is important that we focus on getting to the African Nations Cup. It will be a great test for us as a team and as individuals. We are still finding our style of play and there are a lot of youngsters coming through and we have to show patience. We want these boys to be ready for 2010 and the Nations Cup can help us in that."

Mokoena has become a key player for English Premiership side Blackburn and, despite the club's hectic fixture schedule this season, he insists that he was delighted to

captain his country against Egypt. "There is no way I would have missed this game. I always love to play for my country," he said.

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"We've had a lot of matches this season with Europe, the League Cup and the Premiership. But I'm still a young man. I love to run around and play whenever I can. Egypt has some good players. So, it wasn't easy for us, but in the second half you saw what we are capable of. They probably deserved to win, but we gave as good as we have."

Source: Sapa-AFP 



Bafana Bafana captain, Aaron Mokoena