

2014 McDonald's U/14 Schools League underway

Heralding its fifth successful year, McDonald's South Africa and the South African Schools Football Association (SASFA) are once again contributing to grassroots development of football in schools.



Since 2010, the league has reached over 3,300 schools and 32,000 children yearly on average, and this year is no different. Hailed as 'Developing Dreams', the McDonald's U/14 Schools League will culminate with the provincial tournament - one in each of the nine provinces - on consecutive weekends until the national finals are held in October.

"The 2010 FIFA World Cup set the spotlight for South Africa's active engagement in football and cemented our passion with the game on an international level. Four years later and with the 2014 FIFA World Cup in progress, we as McDonald's South Africa are proud to still be fulfilling our legacy and long-term commitment to developing football around children," says McDonald's South Africa's Corporate Affairs Director, Sechaba Motsieloa.

Seeking the nation's top U/14 schools team, the provincial finals will run from the opening provincial qualifying tournament in the North West on 26 July, followed by:

- Mpumalanga (2 August)
- Gauteng (9 August)
- Limpopo (16 August)
- Northern Cape (23 August)
- KwaZulu-Natal (30 August)
- Free State (6 September)
- Eastern Cape (13 September)
- Western Cape (20 September)

The national finals will take place in Gauteng from 1 - 4 October 2014.

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"Every child deserves a person that will encourage, mould, shape, listen to their aspirations and stand up to actually lead them through the right path of life. The McDonald's U/14 Schools League is not an event but it is a process of fine tuning, of harnessing the natural talent that exists amongst our youngsters. We are convinced that the players at this age group with the right training models are ready to gradually enter the semi-professional levels of football," says President of SASFA, Mandla 'Shoes' Mazibuko.

The McDonald's U/14 Schools League has produced young talent that has already been introduced to play professionally:

- Nhlakanipho "Nana" Ntuli, who featured in the 2010 edition as top goal scorer, went on to sign for the development side of FC Twente, Holland's Eredivisie topflight club.
- Siyanda Ngubo, currently training with Orlando Pirates first team, was also part of the Johannesburg Secondary School team - McDonalds U/14 in 2010.
- Sibongiseni Mkhize, currently with the reserve team of Super Sport FC, gained International exposure at junior level when he was part of the Metropolitan 2013 Schools World Cup with Rosina Sedibane.

"We are very excited for the year ahead as we also introduce a new partnership with KNVB (Koninklijke Nederlandse Voetbalbond - Dutch Football Association) to train 25 school teachers/coaches and SASFA members in each province during the provincial finals. This training develops coaches that have a direct contact with the U/14 players in schools," concludes Motsieloa.

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