

All is not lost!

That is the message Bafana Bafana players are promoting ahead of their difficult 2009 FIFA Confederations Cup clash against New Zealand tomorrow, (Wednesday 17 June) at the Royal Bafokeng Sports Palace in Rustenburg. Kickoff is 20h30.

Addressing a media briefing after their last training session before the match, goalkeeper Itumeleng Khune says Bafana still had a fighting chance to make it to the semi-finals, “we still have two games to play, we dropped points against Iraq but then ask me that question after tomorrow's match,” said Khune when asked what it would mean for South Africa not to qualify for the second round.

But the goalkeeper was quick to point out that the match against New Zealand will not be an easy one as they have good tall strikers and Bafana Bafana need to defend well in set-pieces.

Coach Joel Natalino Santana, who is well aware how vital a win is tomorrow, echoed Khune's words, “we need to win the match, even though New Zealand lost five-nil to Spain on Sunday, they are a good team and we will have to improve to beat them. I think we will score one or two goals but we will also need some luck,” said Santana.

Santana hinted that he might start with England-based Steven Pienaar, who came on as a second-half substitute in the one-all draw against Iraq. The Brazilian says Pienaar will bring in a lot of confidence and quality in midfield.

Meanwhile the clash against the Kiwis will mark 50 caps for midfielder MacBeth Sibaya.

The 31 year old was also part of the 2002 FIFA World Cup Bafana Bafana squad in Korea and Japan.

Santana had nothing but praise for him, “he is a good organiser and he is committed, together with Aaron Mokoena, Brian Baloyi and Matthew Booth they are helping the youngsters settle,” said Santana.

His words were echoed by Khune, “congratulations to Macbeth for reaching 50 caps, he has been an inspiration to us youngsters, we have learnt a lot from him and we are still learning, hopefully we will also reach that milestone,” said the goalkeeper.

Bafana Bafana play their last group match against Spain at the Free State Stadium in Bloemfontein on Saturday (20 June).

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