

SHAPING CAMPUS LIFE THROUGH THE SRC BALLOT



Image Source: Google images

By Ncobile Mahlangu

Student Representative Council (SRC) elections are a crucial part of university life, giving students a voice in decision-making processes and shaping the overall campus experience. As a university student, participating in the local campus SRC elections is a chance to influence the direction of your institution and have a say in issues that directly affect you.

SRC's represent the entire student body, providing a platform for students to express their concerns, ideas and aspirations. They play a vital role in holding the university accountable for its decisions, and ensuring that students' needs are not overlooked, and are being considered and adhered to. In addition, the SRC works to enhance student life, advocating for improved facilities, better service and stronger academic and emotional support systems.

Your vote has power, and your decision can make a lasting impact. Before voting, take time to get to know the candidates. Read campaign materials and pay attention to their manifesto sessions, attend debates, campaign events and ask questions to understand each candidates' vision and goals. Identify the key issues that affect students and evaluate where each candidate stands on these issues. Look for those who demonstrate strong leadership, clear plans and genuine commitment to improving student life.

By participating in the SRC elections and voting for the best candidates, you help shape your campus experience and contribute to a better university environment for everyone. Remember, if you are not happy with the outcome this year, stay engaged and make a change next year. Every vote matter and every student voice count.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to yet another amazing edition of Madibaz News!

It has been a while since we have graced your eyes, but we're back, better and ready to end the year off with a bang.

Fresh from October where we celebrated various types campaigns for breast cancer awareness month, mental health awareness, and pride month this edition is guaranteed to cover all your needs as we head into the busy month of November. Between studying for exams, last minute assessments and getting ready to head home, let's face it, you need a break – and this is it.

From campus news to groundbreaking new activity in science, from movie recommendations for the spooky season to awareness articles, from local to international sports news – we have it all (as per usual) - so during your study break, pick up from where you left off and then head back to hitting the books because this is the last stretch.

On that note, it being the last stretch it all, remember to look after yourself in this busy time. Whether you wind down by taking walks, watching a short video or reading a book, be mindful towards yourself – despite it being a stressful time, you don't need to be a walking reminder.

Good luck with the upcoming assessments and exams, you've got this! We'll be here for a celebratory edition when you get back.

Keep up by following us on socials to see when that is.

Leigh-Nakeetah Jason

STUDENTS WALK FROM TOWN TO CAMPUS AMID TRANSPORT CRISIS



By Lesedi Morwe

A transport disruption in August left many Nelson Mandela University students stranded in town, forcing them to walk several kilometres to the Summerstrand campuses to write scheduled tests.

The sudden shortage of university shuttles

meant hundreds of students were unable to access reliable transport from central town areas to campus. Many were seen walking long distances, some in groups, in order to arrive on time for assessments that were not postponed despite these issues.

"We had no choice but to walk: said third year student, Zukhanye Ncanywa, who had a test scheduled for 11AM. "The shuttles just weren't there, and with tests on the line, we couldn't afford to wait."

The incident raised wider concerns about student welfare and the university's ability to manage essential services during times of strain. For many students, the issue was not just about inconvenience, it was about safety and academic fairness.

"The university isn't meeting transport needs, and I've seen little improvement in my three years/" shared Minentle Mkhize, a shuttle marshal. "Students often take out their frustration on us marshals, but we're just messengers. We don't have the power to request more shuttles." She added that while the shuttle cards were introduced to track usage, over 3000 had yet to be collected, making it difficult to improve services without the necessary data.

Several parts of Gqeberha were also affected by power outages on the same day, adding to the difficulties faced by students preparing for assessments.

Students called for greater transparency and better contingency plans in the event of future transport disruptions. They demanded for the university to improve shuttle reliability and ensure backup options, especially during text and exam periods when pressure on services are at its peak.

STUDENT SOCIETIES CELEBRATE WOMEN IN STEM



Image Source: Yaroslav Shuraev on Pexels

By Louisa Mkhabela

The Nelson Mandela University Student Representative Council (SRC) and Sci-SA partnered in September to host a dynamic event in celebrating Women's Month with speakers from various fields in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

Starting off the event, Associate Professor in Biochemistry, Carminita Frost, highlighted the diversity of career paths in science, emphasizing that "there's no one size fits all." Professor Frost, recognized for her research into cannabinoids and their anti-cancer potential, stressed the importance of networking for undergraduate students.

The next speaker was Dr Nicole Vorster, a developer and coordinator of the University's Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Formulation Science, who encouraged students to look into the emerging career path of her specialist field. "It blends scientific principles with creativity to develop stable, chemical and homogenous products for beauty brands" Dr Vorster noted, further making mention that the course –

requiring a bachelor's degree with a major in final-year chemistry – also equips scientists with entrepreneurial skills.

Mrs Andi Pujirana, the holder of the Frank Nabarro Award for Best PhD Oral Presentation, followed in sharing her unique journey as the only women in her research department. Mrs Pujirana is currently completing her PhD in Educational Physics in South Africa, though hailing originally from Indonesia, which she promoted as a great place for students to complete programs in STEM that are fully funded.

Finally, Dr Jenske Didloff, a postdoctoral researcher in microbiology, relayed the need for adaptability and resilience in STEM. The University alumna of 12 years also shared her experience persisting through challenges on her field, such as the setbacks of COVID-19.

"Previously, most STEM careers were male dominated, but today's speakers are a testament that there is now a space for women," Dipuo Grace, Faculty of Science SRC Representative, commented.

THE UGLY TRUTH: WASTE IN OUR COMMUNITIES

By Ziggy Unam Motman

A piece of land that was once a safe path for children, allowing them to avoid roads full of cars, has turned into a littering space. This dumping isn't just ugly; it's a huge threat to our communities, our health, and the kids who play in these grounds.

The biggest crisis we face as communities is our struggle with waste, often caused by improper waste management plaguing our cities. These dumping sites fill the air with toxic fumes that harm our health. According to the Department of Environmental Affairs, over 90% of waste in South Africa ends up in landfills, and these areas often become illegal dumping sites.

But the real question is, who can we blame? I believe the responsibility for these sites lies with us. We are the ones who fail the system because we do not care.

Liyanda Nkwenkwe, a community member from the Hlalani area near Shukushukuma in Motherwell, shares this frustration. "We once held a meeting as people who live in Hlalani and I suggested that the black plastics we use for our trash, let us take them to the side of the road where the trash truck will be able to pick it up on Fridays," she says, "but I still see people throwing trash everywhere".

This huge crisis leaves me with urgent questions about how the municipality should tackle this situation:

- Should they hold community leaders accountable?
- Should they fine the communities that have dumping sites?
- Or should they employ people to clean these sites? But, as the author notes, would this just make people more careless?



WHY SOCIAL MEDIA REFLECTS US MORE THAN WE THINK

By Asisipho Mphaheni

Sizwe scrolls through new cars, soft-life vacations, and glowing skin. A flood of achievements that make his own life feel painfully ordinary.

“Social media is toxic,” he sighs, tossing his phone aside and promising himself a break.

But the next day, he’s back again, posing beside his friend’s car, captioning it “Grind mode,” hoping the lighting hides his tired eyes.

Sizwe doesn’t realize he’s both the creator and the critic of the world he calls fake. He posts what he wants others to see and hides what he fears they’ll judge. Then, when others do the same, he feels small, forgetting that he, too, is performing for applause.

Like many of us, Sizwe forgets that social media doesn’t breathe on its own. It’s fed by the human desire to be seen, admired, and validated. We

often call social media “toxic,” but we overlook our own role in shaping that toxicity. It’s the same way money is said to be the root of all evil; neither money nor media acts alone—they merely reveal what’s already within us.

Comparison isn’t new. Long before the internet, people compared homes, clothes, grades, and careers. The difference now is visibility: we’ve built a public stage for our insecurities.

But maybe comparison isn’t all bad. It can push us to grow, reflect, or redefine success, but only if we approach it with awareness rather than envy. The real danger lies in removing ourselves from accountability, pretending we’re victims of a machine we collectively built.

Sizwe represents more than one person. He is you, me, and the millions who curate, compare, and then complain. If social media is a mirror, then perhaps blaming the reflection won’t change the face staring back.



Image Source: Unsplash

GLOW, DON'T OVERGO

By Katleho Mokone

The semester is over, your last paper is in, and freedom never felt so good. The library quiet zone has been vacated. You have earned the December Groove, that deep, collective sigh of relief that ushers in the holiday season. After months of late nights and high pressure, the urge to celebrate is powerful.

But, before you dive into the festive season, it is worth taking a mindful pause. Moving from academic burnout to an all-out holiday blast off requires a strategy. True success this December isn’t measured by how many parties you attend, but by how well you recharge for the new year. The biggest trap after finals is the “I deserve this” mentality, which often leads to unhealthy extremes. Instead of viewing the break as a hundred percent unrestricted free-for-all, treat it as a deliberate period of recalibration.

Embrace the “soft yes”. You don’t have to commit to every event. Try saying, “I’m only staying for an hour”, or “I’ll just have one drink and switch to water.” True safety is about honouring your own boundaries, especially when faced with peer pressure. Your body and mind are exhausted from the academic marathon. Don’t swap one form of burnout (studying) for another (partying).

The best kind of groove is one that leaves you feeling refreshed, not depleted. True end-of-year entertainment doesn’t have to be high-cost or high-risk. Let your December Groove be a celebration of your hard work, a rewarding pause that perfectly sets the stage for a successful start to the new semester, because how you recharge now shapes how strong you start next year.



Image Source: rollingstoneafrica.com

SEEN. SAFE. PROUD.



Image Source: wikipedia.com

By **Katleho Mokone**

For a student questioning their identity, new to campus, or not yet fully out, seeing a pride flag can be a literal signal of safety. It instantly reduces the emotional burden of having to assess whether a space or person is accepting. A flag in a residence hall window, pinned to a library cubicle, or hanging on an office door, sends a clear, immediate message: "You are seen, and you are welcome here."

These flags are far more than decoration; they are a visible system of affirmation that fosters community and supports emotional beings. When identities are affirmed in physical spaces, it counteracts the isolating effect of micro aggressions and the general anxiety that comes with university life. It transforms an anonymous campus into a network of identified safe zones, allowing students to focus their energy on academics and personal growth, rather than constant self-monitoring.

For students seeking connection, a visible flag

can act as an open invitation. It points them into community centres, student unions or supporting staff members without the need to ask uncomfortable or revealing questions. The flag communicates that inclusion and understanding already exist within that space.

The consistent and public display of pride colours also sends a powerful message to the wider university community. When allies choose to fly a pride flag, they use their visibility to create a safer, more inclusive environment for others. This action is a clear affirmation of acceptance, shifting the burden of advocacy away from queer students alone, signalling that respect and equality are shared campus values.

Ultimately, these colourful banners represent a collective commitment to a shared goal: to ensure that every corner of the university offers a space where students do not need to perform, minimize or hide. The flags are a daily, vital promise that here on this campus, everyone has the unconditional right to be their authentic, whole self.

THE ROMANTICIZATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA



Image Source: Nura du Plessis

By **Nura du Plessis**

Social media is everywhere; we connect through Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, X and countless other platforms. However, people often overlook its negative aspects. The romanticizing

of social media has become normalized across all ages. We see it through trends in fashion, the everyday lives of content creators, sports highlights, celebrity updates, and culinary content. What we don't see is how much time, effort and emotional toll goes into it, and what happens in the lives of the individuals behind the camera.

When we romanticize social media, we often forget that drawbacks come along with it. Negative aspects include privacy concerns, mental health struggles, online bullying, the spread of misinformation, and how different individuals can be in real life, as to what they portray on social media. Many social media personalities are ordinary people just like us, facing the same real-life challenges. The difference is that they mark their hardships by presenting a polished version of their lives for public consumption.

We frequently see content creators and celebrities living their 'best' lives and find ourselves longing for the same. But are their lives as ideal as they seem? Perhaps not. As actor Timothee Chalamet once said, "To be young now, and to be young whenever – I can only speak for my generation – is to be intensely judged". This statement reflects the immense pressure social media personalities face to maintain a flawless image.

As viewers, we forget that the individuals we follow are also human with emotions and real-life problems. The idea of the romanticization of social media overlooks the pressure of needing to maintain this perfect image and how social media has become negatively addictive, romanticizing social media highlights the positives, concealing the negatives, leading many to chase an unrealistic version of happiness and success.

SPOOKY SEASON SELECTIONS

By Riley Meyer

With October having been Spooky Season, it only meant one thing - horror movie central. While the season has ceased, nothing is stopping us from making our late, warm summer nights a seance to remember! Whether you're into old classics, modern scream fests, or something more family-friendly, here are some spooky season movie picks to suit everyone's taste.

Of course, it's only right to start off with a cult classic. Stanley Kubrick's 'The Shining' is the perfect movie to kick off your marathon and get you into that chilling Halloween mood. If you are looking for something more kid friendly, the Nightmare Before Christmas beautifully bridges the gap between two of the biggest holidays of the year, Halloween and Christmas.

Now, if you're in the mood for something fresh, 2025 has been a standout year for horror, from slashers to supernatural thrillers. Some of my top picks from this year include 'Weapons', 'Bring her Back', and 'Together'. Each brings a unique twist to the genre, perfect for a fright-filled night.

If you can't decide where to start (or just want to binge), go for a movie series marathon. The Conjuring Universe and the Scream Franchise will deliver the chills and jump scares that define Halloween. And if horror really isn't your thing, that's totally okay – movies like Scary Movie are there to give you all the Halloween vibes without the nightmares.

Now that you have your list, grab some popcorn, turn off the lights, and enjoy! Happy watching and happy haunting and even if you're spending



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IRIS: THE FIRST SOUTH AFRICAN AI ROBOT FOR TEACHING

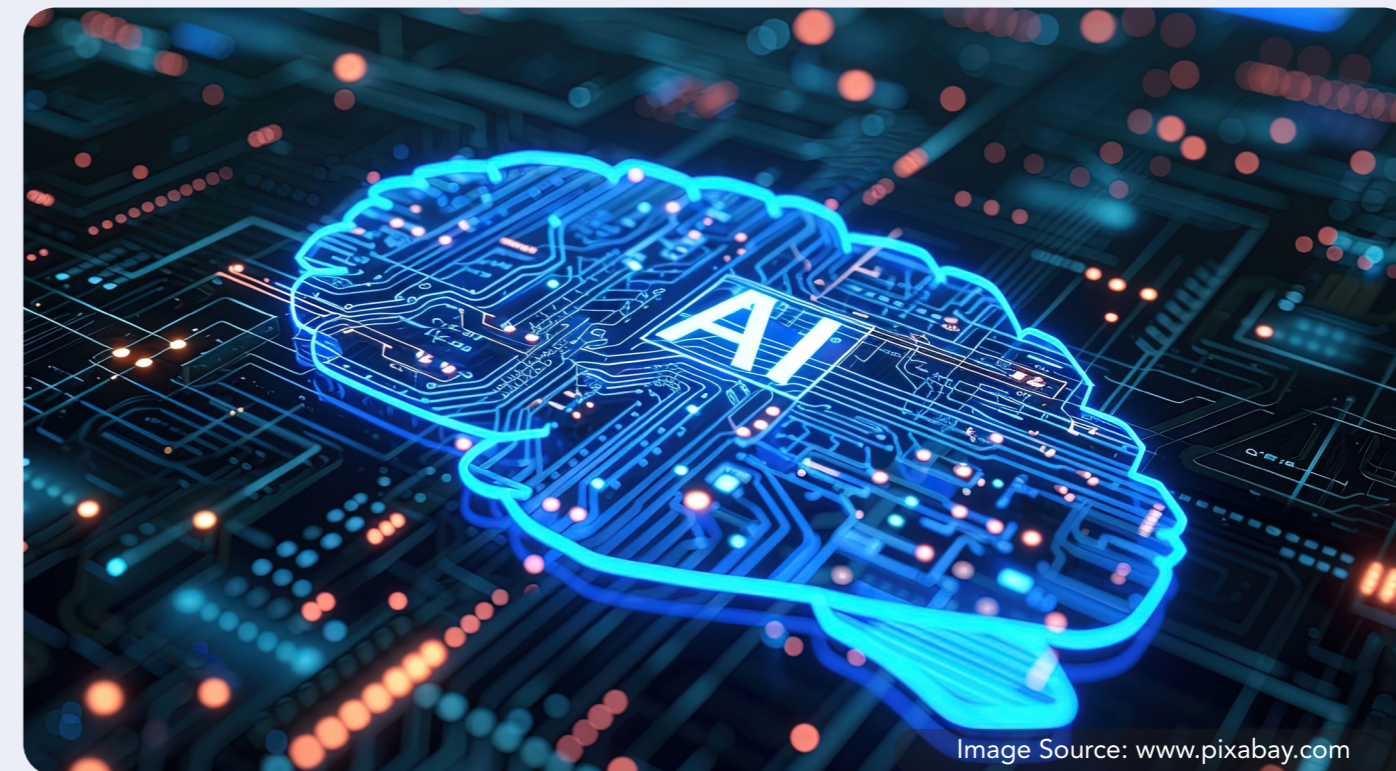


Image Source: www.pixabay.com

By Mthetho Njube

In August 2025, the Deputy Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation, Ms. Nomalungelo Gina, officially launched the country's first pioneering educational AI robot in Durban, aiming to provide better quality education for learners across South Africa.

IRIS, founded by Thando Gumede – a young businesswoman from KwaZulu-Natal and the founder of BSG Technologies – is described in the report as “the first AI robot to tutor and master all subjects from the lower grades to tertiary level, using all South Africa’s official languages.”

Using the power of artificial intelligence, IRIS is designed to offer personalized learning, interactive lesson, and real-time feedback, enabling learners to progress at their own pace and thrive academically. Furthermore, the report notes that IRIS was developed to provide equal access to knowledge, as every child deserves it. Consequently, IRIS is

expected to spark conversations about the future of learning, stimulate partnerships, and unlock new opportunities for education-driven economic growth.

Gina believes this robot will not only teach learners but also give them the opportunity to learn about technology, according to a Sunday Times report. “This will enhance teaching and learning and will close the gap in the country, especially in maths, science and technology,” said Gina. She also urged young women and youth to take advantage of government funding for innovation, emphasizing that women should lead in shaping the future of science, innovation, and AI.

During the launch, there was a live-demonstration in which learners interacted with the robot to test its capabilities. Education officials highlighted that teachers will be trained to work with the technology, leaving many to wonder whether this could eventually replace traditional teaching roles.

ROOIBOS: TRADITIONAL REMEDY TO SCIENTIFICALLY-BACKED HEALTH DRINK



By Sonia Van Der Linde

Aspalathus linearis, commonly known as Rooibos, is a caffeine-free herbal tea native to South Africa. Over the past few years it has grown from a traditional remedy into a globally recognised health drink, due to its numerous health benefits.

This plant grows, almost exclusively, in the Cederberg region of the Western Cape, as it requires very specific conditions to thrive: well-drained sandy and acidic soils in a Mediterranean-type climate. For generations, the Khoisan people used rooibos for its soothing properties, brewing the needle-like leaves into a delicious and fragrant red tea, long before it reached commercial fame.

Modern science has confirmed many of rooibos's traditional benefits. The tea is naturally rich in antioxidants, particularly aspalathin and nothofagin, which help neutralise harmful free radicals in the body. These compounds are being studied for their potential to reduce vascular inflammation, improve heart health, and support the immune system. Unlike black

or green tea, rooibos contains no caffeine and very little tannins, making it gentle on the stomach.

Research conducted at Stellenbosch University and the South African Medical Research Council has also highlighted the possible role that rooibos may play in managing blood sugar levels and protecting liver function. Further studies are also exploring its cosmetic and anti-aging benefits, as the antioxidants found within rooibos help protect skin cells from oxidative stress.

Economically, rooibos has become one of South Africa's most valuable natural exports. The industry supports thousands of local farmers and workers, and in 2014, "Rooibos" became a protected designation under European law, ensuring that only tea grown in specific regions of South Africa can bear the name.

From an ancient traditional remedy to a scientifically validated health drink, rooibos stands as a symbol of South Africa's heritage and growing contribution to worldwide science and health research.

THE SCIENCE BEHIND FOOTWEAR AND FITNESS



By Ayabonga Malima

As the warm and sunny season of summer approaches, many people are preparing to spend more time outdoors, going to the beach, hiking, etc. This most likely means that they are currently working toward their ideal "summer body" and improving their overall fitness. Whether your goal is a defined six-pack or an hourglass figure, one crucial factor often overlooked in fitness preparation is footwear. The type of shoes you wear during workouts can significantly influence not only your endurance but also your bone and joint health.

Before choosing an exercise routine, it is important to distinguish between ordinary sneakers and athletic running shoes. Ordinary sneakers are primarily designed for aesthetic purposes and general, non-active comfort, not for the strenuous demands of exercise. Many individuals choose to wear old casual sneakers to the gym to save money, but this decision can have negative long-term effects on bone and joint health.

Casual sneakers typically have soft, flexible soles that lack the structural support and shock absorption required for high-impact

activities such as running or jumping. Using these for workouts can lead to improper weight distribution, which can result in ankle instability, severe knee strain, and even chronic injuries such as shin splints, fractures or muscle tears.

Running shoes, on the contrary, are scientifically engineered to support the natural structure of the foot. They usually contain cushioned midsoles made of materials such as ethylene-vinyl acetate or polyurethane, which absorb impact forces during running. This shock absorption reduces the pressure exerted on the ankle, knee, and hip joints. Additionally, most running shoes incorporate arch and heel support that enhance stability and prevent the inward rolling of the foot, a common cause of plantar fasciitis-pain and inflammation of the heel and foot arch.

The right pair of running shoes not only enhances comfort but also plays a crucial role in injury prevention. Investing in quality athletic footwear is therefore an investment in both performance and health. So, as you lace up to jog, lift, or train for your summer body, remember, your choice of footwear could be the difference between progress and pain.

THE VITAL ROLE OF BEES IN SOUTH AFRICA'S BIODIVERSITY

By Sonia Van Der Linde

Bees have always played a crucial role in maintaining South Africa's ecosystems and agriculture, and yet their survival remains increasingly under threat. South Africa is home to more than a thousand different species of bees, most notably among them being the Cape honeybee (*Apis mellifera*) and the African honeybee (*Apis mellifera scutellata*), both vital pollinators for many wild plants and crops.

According to the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), around 50–60% of the country's flowering plants depend on insect pollination, which is mainly carried out by bees. Key crops such as apples, canola, citrus, sunflowers, and lucerne rely heavily on the productivity of bees.

However, bee populations are facing a multitude of threats. Habitat loss, pesticide exposure, climate change, and the spread of diseases such as the Varroa mite pose deadly challenges for many bee populations. Urbanisation and the overuse of chemical sprays reduce the

availability of flowering plants and nesting sites for bees, while droughts and heatwaves limit nectar resources. Scientists from the University of Pretoria's Bee Research Unit have been researching methods to reduce the spread of pathogens and overuse of pesticides, as well as improving the resilience of bee colonies through habitat restoration efforts.

To protect these pollinators, South Africa launched its National Pollination Strategy in 2021, aiming to promote sustainable beekeeping, conserve wild bee habitats, and educate farmers on pollinator-friendly practices. Community projects are also encouraging the growing of safe, indigenous plant gardens to help bees find shelter and food.

Many people do not realise just how crucial healthy bee populations are to an ecosystem. They are key allies in preserving biodiversity and food security through crop pollination. Ensuring their future means ensuring our own and local efforts can help aid in protecting this invaluable insect.



Image Source: www.pexels.com

NTSUNDWANA BACK IN ACTION

By Thandolukayise Shangase

Eastern Cape born footballer Somila Ntsundwana, has returned to the football field after nearly a month off the field. His absence was due to a collapsed deal to Chippa United. The former Richards Bay FC forward became a free agent after parting ways with Natal Rich Boys in June 2025.

Regarded as one of the most successful players in the Eastern Cape, Ntsundwana featured in the Premier Soccer League for five consecutive seasons with four different teams: Bidvest Wits FC from 2015 until 2017. He then went on to Royal Eagles from 2019 to 2020. Thereafter, he played for AmaZulu FC from 2020 until 2021 and finally Richards Bay from 2021 until 2025.

During this time, he scored 10 goals and assisted eight times across all competitions. Ntsundwana spent four years with Richards Bay FC while in the GladAfrica Championship, securing the top flight with the team and marking his debut with a goal on their opening of the DSTV Premiership 2022/2023 season

against Golden Arrows in August 2022. To maintain his fitness, Ntsundwana has been involved in Gqeberha, while waiting for the offer after returning home.

After his contract with the Natal Rich Boys expired in June 2025, the Gqeberhan had offers in Limpopo from Sekhukhune United and the Eastern Cape with Chippa United. The Chillie Boys seemed to have secured the signature of the forward, but later the deal collapsed due to internal issues that were linked to former Chippa United Coach Sinethemba Badela.

The 1-1 draw against Mamelodi and 1-0 defeat from newly promoted Durban City saw Chippa United earning only 1 point from two opening games of the 2025/26 Betway season. The exit of Badela saw Ntsundwana training with the Chillie Boys preparing for the upcoming games.

In the third match of the season, Ntsundwana made his debut in Chippa United colours, facing his former club Richards Bay FC. The match ended 1-0 in favour of the Natal Rich Boys, with him playing the whole first half of the match.



Image Source: Chippa United Facebook page