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2016 COSAFU UNDER-20 CHAMPIONSHIP DRAW

The first round draw for the 2016 COSAFU Under-20 Championships, sponsored by PPC, was made on Wednesday in Moruleng in South Africa's North West province, where the prestigious youth tournament will be held from December 7-16, bringing together the best young talent from the Southern African region.

Hosts and defending champions South Africa will have their work cut-out in the defence of their title as they take on neighbours Lesotho, Swaziland and Botswana in Group A, all teams that have caused them problems in the past.

With only the top team in each pool to advance to the semifinals, there will also be an early exit for one of the region's heavyweights as Group B contains Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi, three teams who might all consider themselves contenders for the title.

Group C contains Angola, Namibia, Seychelles and Mauritius, while Group D has Mozambique, Comoros Islands and East African guest nation Rwanda, who compete in the place of Madagascar.

The teams will play each other in a round-robin format with the top sides from each pool advancing to the semifinals.

One twist is that the top teams in Groups B and D after the second round of matches will play a third game as a crossover fixture between those two pools, to ensure that most competing sides get to play three times.

The top team in Group B will play the second team in Group D and vice-versa.

The group matches start on December 7 and will be completed on December 13. The semifinals will take place a day later, before the remaining teams enjoy a rest day.

The third-place play-off and final of the competition will both be played on December 16, which is a public holiday in South Africa.

The matches will be played at two venues, the Mogwase Stadium and Moruleng Stadium, with the latter being used exclusively from the semifinals onwards.

COSAFU are staging the Under-20 competition for the first time since 2013 and it makes a welcome return to the calendar, providing the opportunity for young stars to catch the eye of international scouts.

“COSAFA is pleased to be able to organise this edition of the Under-20 tournament as one of our objectives is to develop and promote football talent in our zone,” says the Chairman of COSAFA’s Competitions Committee, Mr Timothy Shongwe.

“Therefore organising this tournament is one of our key focus areas and we would like to thank the South African Football Association, the Governments of the Republic of South Africa and the North West Province, our valued sponsor PPC, and all our partners for assisting us in this regard.

“The North West Province is a fitting stage for such an important tournament where we will catch a glimpse of our future stars in Southern African football.”

PPC have come on board as sponsors of the tournament for the first time and are delighted to be able to assist in the development of football on the African continent.

“As an African brand with a continental footprint, PPC sees this sponsorship as a key means of contributing to Africa’s development – specifically in terms of the teams and communities, and greater countries the tournament touches,” says Rob Rein, PPC Executive: Sales and Marketing.

“The sponsorship speaks to our appreciation that to build or create anything of quality takes time, and that ‘quality matters’ in all we do. In assisting to provide these up and coming teams with the platform they need to develop their skills and grow in experience, we look forward to them to going on to realise their future dreams going forward – in the same way that other COSAFA legends have been able to do.”

Kgosi Nyalala Pilane from the Bakgatla-Ba-Kgafela, who will play host to the tournament in Moruleng, are delighted to have the competition in their community after successfully playing host the 2015 COSAFA senior men’s championship.

"We are looking forward to welcoming the teams to Moruleng. Our partnership with COSAFA is a welcome opportunity in our quest to implement our master-plan to develop our community," Kgosi Pilane says.

Zambia have been the most successful side in the history of the COSAFA Under-20 Championships with 10 victories to their name, followed by Zimbabwe with six.

South Africa have claimed five titles with Madagascar the only other team to lift the trophy after their 2005 triumph.

Ends....

About PPC Ltd

A leading supplier of cement and related products in southern Africa, PPC Ltd has nine cement factories and four milling depots in South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe and most recently Rwanda with a current capacity to produce around eight and half million tons of cement products each year. As part of its strategy and long-term plan to more than double its business every 10 years, PPC is expanding its operations in existing markets including South Africa and Zimbabwe, and extending its footprint into the DRC and Ethiopia. The recent acquisitions of Safika Cement, Pronto Readymix (including Ulula Ash) and 3Q Mahuma Concrete form part of the company’s channel management strategy for South Africa. As a result of these acquisitions PPC’s footprint has grown to include 26 readymix batching plants across South Africa and Mozambique. PPC also produces aggregates,

metallurgical-grade lime, burnt dolomite and limestone, with PPC's Mooiplaas aggregates quarry in Gauteng having the largest aggregate production capacity in South Africa.

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