

## **Solomon Malatsi: Minister's Spin And Hype Belies Mediocre Accomplishments**

Honourable Chairperson

Honourable Minister

Honourable Members of the Portfolio Committee on Sport and Recreation

In the interest of fairness, let me start by congratulating Minister Mbalula for the sterling work he is doing to elevate netball and basketball through the professional leagues he has spearheaded.

We also acknowledge the incredible impact of the Minister's Sport Bursary in giving talented children from poor backgrounds the opportunity to play sport at some of the country's best sport-focused schools.

I also want to applaud the Director-General and his team for taking into consideration the portfolio committee's input by introducing the schedule of penalties for provincial departments that misuse their allocations for sport and recreation.

Chairperson, the DA's assessment of the 2015/16 budget and the political leadership of the Department of Sport and Recreation is that they are punching way below their weight.

The Department's blueprint for sports development – the National Sport and Recreation Plan – remains an unfunded mandate due to inadequate funding from Treasury.

At a time when the fiscus is overstretched, government departments and entities must be prudent at all times. Sadly, this is not the case in this department.

The Department continues to spend millions on the Sports Awards while underinvesting in sports infrastructure continues.

This is underscored by the fact that the Sport Infrastructure Support programme has been allocated a mere R9.7 million, equating to 1% of the Department's total budget.

The Minister gets touchy on this subject because it exposes his hypocrisy. But let's put things into perspective:

The Sports Awards are an extravagant luxury when the Minister already has his own Excellence Outreach Programme through which he awards prize money to athletes who excel in various codes on a regular basis.

The Minister is an expert of double standards. He sprints to appoint a “technical team” to compile a report on Bafana Bafana’s failures at the African Cup of Nations, yet did not extend the same courtesy to the Proteas for failing to win the Cricket World Cup when they should have.

He is quick to gallivant to Las Vegas, in his capacity as Floyd Mayweather’s groupie, for his fight with Pacquiao yet he failed to support local boxing champions, Hekkie Butler and Zolani Tete, when they fought overseas recently.

Honourable Chairperson, the Minister likes to dribble us with big ideas, using big words.

Regrettably he is not a man of action. Beneath all that glitz and glamour is an empty vessel.

Lest we be accused of playing the man rather than the ball; here are the facts:

- 1) Contrary to the Minister’s repeated utterances that the Sports Awards will “soon be self-funding”, there is still no credible plan to achieve this.
- 2) Almost a year after the Minister told us in this very House that he was working on a funding model that “advocates for the establishment of a new ticket levy to be imposed on sport tickets” there is no clear indication of its shape or form, no assessment of its possible impact on ticket sales, no input from sport federations and no consultation with sports fans who will bear the brunt of this tax.
- 3) Again, last year the Minister announced that he will “introduce a Geographical Information System to assist with a database on facilities and the National Facilities Plan”. And where are we on this now? A month ago, the Director-General told the portfolio committee that this was stillborn because the Department doesn’t have the capacity nor resources to do it.

Honourable Chairperson, boxing in our country is dying a slow painful death.

The Minister declared in September 2011 that “we want to bring back the glory of boxing through a decisive commitment to strong leadership and quality management.”

It is under his leadership that many of the ills plaguing boxing have become chronic. Your blunders, Honourable Minister, are killing boxing.

Before the Minister accuses me of criticising him unjustly, here are some of his blunders:

- 1) The Minister and the Department approved the appointment of a convicted thief with a mediocre record in management and leadership as CEO of Boxing South Africa (BSA) in 2011.
- 2) Moffat Qithi has been a liability to boxing since his appointment, costing the Department approximately R10 million in court cases as a direct result of his defamatory utterances and mismanagement of BSA.
- 3) Despite having been suspended in November 2013, the Minister, the Department and BSA all found it in their wisdom to give Mr Qithi over R200 000 in bonuses for the last two financial years.
- 4) The appointment of Loyiso Mtya as acting CEO BSA, who oversaw the failure to pay approximately R7.5 million in taxes to SARS, which BSA then deducted from boxers' winnings.
- 5) BSA's belligerent attempts to control boxing broadcasting rights has prolonged the ongoing blackout of boxing on television.

Honourable chairperson, we "will never bring back the glory of boxing" as long as BSA doesn't have a full time competent CEO, for as long as it fails to act decisively against dodgy promoters who exploit boxers, and for as long as it hesitates to punish its licensees for cheating boxers.

Chairperson, allow me pay tribute to Banyana Banyana's Portia Modise on the occasion of her retirement. She earned 120 caps for the National team, making her one of the most experienced women in the game in the world and contributed immensely to soccer in our country.

Let's reflect on the unacceptable scale of gender inequality in South African sport. The boardrooms of our sport federations are palaces of patriarchy where the best interests of women in sport are overlooked.

It is reprehensible that female athletes in our national teams who represent our country, are either paid peanuts or not paid at all.

It is shocking that our national female hockey team, who have consistently qualified for the Olympics, are not paid match fees for playing for the country.

It is disgusting that Banyana Banyana – the country's best performing national football team for some time – are paid R5000 per match while their male counterparts earn up to R60 000 for a win.

As such, many of them have to find full time jobs and take unpaid leave to play for our national teams.

We must reject any justification or defence of the status quo which insists that female athletes must be paid less because they are women.

We must dismantle barriers to gender equality in sport. We must do so because it is the right and just thing to do.

It is for this reason that the DA has approached the Commission for Gender Equality to tackle the unequal match fees for playing for our national teams.

We are grateful that they have agreed to institute an investigation into this matter.

Chairperson, we must give young girls and women the opportunity to participate in sport without the fear of discrimination on the basis of their gender and the incentive of competitive salaries to pursue professional careers.

But maybe the Minister is preoccupied with the deployment of SAFA President, Danny Jordaan, as a cadre of the ANC to Port Elizabeth (PE), violating SAFA's own constitution. This does not bode well for the continued recovery of the federation. At the same time, do the people of PE not deserve a full time mayor? Well yes they do and that person will be the DA's Athol Trollip.

Honourable Minister, we dare not only treat our athletes well only when it is convenient for photo opportunities to milk their victories.

We must not allow federations to bully national team players who fight for reasonable demands, like the inclusion of medical insurance in their contracts, as Basketball South Africa did.

Unlike some opposition parties, we are not in opposition for the sake of opposing only. We have alternative solutions to ensure that sport is successful. We want this Department to succeed because if it does, we will produce enough talent to be a winning nation in all codes:

So here are some of our suggestions:

- 1) Appoint a competent full time CEO for BSA with a proven record of success in the sport.
- 2) Establish professional leagues for female football, cricket and rugby and immediately improve the match fees for Banyana Banyana, female Proteas and Boks.

3) Make it compulsory for all federations to cover medical insurance of all national team players at all times, whether at training camps or playing for the country.

4) Build strong synergy with the Department of Human Settlements and local municipalities to ensure that when new communities are established, sports facilities are built as well by optimizing the USDG (Urban Settlements Development Grant) funding.

Chairperson, the Honourable Minister knows his department is under-delivering on its core mandate. It is for this reason that he is building a spin machine in the Department to hype up its modest accomplishments.

From one former spin doctor, to your spin doctors, Honourable Minister, you can spin some of the people all the time or even spin all people some of the time, but you can never, and will never, spin all the people, all the time.

Kea leboga.

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### **Darren Bergman: Investment in grass-roots development vital for the future of sport in SA**

Honourable Chairperson,

*Nelson Mandela once said that "Sport has the power to change the world...it has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope where once there was only despair. It is more powerful than government in breaking down racial barriers."*

Unfortunately, 21 years down the line we are still looking at plans for transformation in sports. We have seen through the strategies of the Cricket South Africa (CSA) and the South African Rugby Union (SARU) and that they are resorting to quotas.

While the DA believes transformation is important and vital to the future of sports in our country, we do not agree with the intervention through quotas.

Vernon Philander is a player that should never have been associated with the word quota. He is world class cricketer and an asset to our country. Yet the speculation around the selection of the team for the semi-final of the Cricket World Cup put an unfair and unfortunate spotlight on a player that did not deserve it.

Omphile Ramela, a promising young batsman, outlined his concerns that he may not be recognized for his talent but rather his colour, in an interview with a local publication. This is not what sport is about.

The worst insult that sports administrators can level against any professional athlete is to select them on political considerations like quotas rather than their performances.

We must not forget what the past did to create barriers to sport but we need to look at the other criteria that continue to hamper the progress of transformation and participation across all sporting codes.

The DA fully supports the need for diversity in sports. To this end our policy on Sports and Recreation outlines the need to focus on both bottom up and top down interventions to promote the required transformation in our sports teams.

It is heartbreaking to see schools and community centres that have only the skeletal remains of tennis or netball courts. Multipurpose courts that are so eroded that the kids sustain more injuries than pleasure from playing on them. Funds are often the excuse but are they really the reason these facilities have been allowed to fall to ruin?

The Active Nation programme is the most expensive part of our budget and rightfully so as this programme is responsible for getting as many people as possible involved in some form of activity or sport. However this requires involvement of more than just the Department of Sport and Recreation as the Department of Basic Education has just as big a part to play in making this programme a success. Schools should be responsible for ensuring participation and the Department of Sports and Recreation should be responsible for ensuring a satisfactory suite of coaches, skills and local competition.

As is the case generally in South Africa, there are schools that have the required funding for sport facilities and there are schools that do not.

Speaker, two decades down the line this is not a good story to tell. How will we ever transform the composition of our sports teams if we do not invest in developing talent in our schools?

We need to even the playing fields and we need to start with the foundation phase. It is no use just fiddling in the highest levels of sport when you run the risk of ruining players, teams, careers and codes. A grass-roots approach is the only way we can attain the laudable goal of representative sporting teams.

We need to ensure that this budget delivers to the community's across South Africa. We need to nurture the process from school and community level through to club level and up to professional leagues. This is the only way that we will grow interest, grow talent and grow competitiveness.

As President Mandela rightly pointed out, sport has an amazing ability to unite our people, to redress the injustices of the past and therefore this department must deliver on their mandate. We dare not fail!