ELLIS WANTS FOUR MORE FRIENDLIES AHEAD OF WAFCON

• Defence of continental title top of the mind for coach

By VUYOKAZI NKANJENI

Banyana coach Desiree Ellis wants to play four more friendlies to get her players in tip-top shape to defend their Women's Africa Cup of Nations title midyear.

All these matches, including the two against Lesotho which they recently played in February, are part of the South African senior women's national team's preparations for the Wafcon in Morocco from July 5-26.

The SA senior women's national team won their first Wafcon in 2022, beating Morocco 2-1 in the final. Before then, they were runners-up on five occasions in 1995, 2000, 2008, 2012 and 2018. They finished third twice – in 2006 and 2010.

Ellis was one of the panellists alongside Springbok manager Zola Yeye and 2008 Paralympics gold medallist Natalie du Toit at the Social Cohesion Dialogue held by Eastern Cape sport, recreation, arts and culture MEC Sibulele Ngongo in Gqeberha on Tuesday.

Speaking to Sowetan's sister publication The Herald after the panel discussion,

•• We are looking at using those months [March-June] for the four friendlies

Desiree Ellis, Banyana Banyana coach

the coach said they were looking at playing two friendlies between March and April and more during May and June. Banyana are drawn in Group C with

Ghana, Mali and Tanzania. The tournament was supposed to

be played in 2024 but was postponed to 2025 as it clashed with the Olympic Games. "We are looking at using the March and April window with two possible friendlies as well as May and June with two possible friendlies.

"Up until Safa has confirmed and finalised the fixtures, I cannot give you any details but we are looking at using those months for the four friendlies that we need to get us ready and near our goal of defending the Wafcon," Ellis said.

Big on unleashing new, young talent into the national team space, Ellis invited U17 national players to a camp ahead of the two friendly matches against Lesotho to broaden her scope of players.

"It's not about the performance. It was about allowing a new group of players to test themselves at a certain level to make sure that we make the core group bigger.

"Last November, and the year before

that, we had a lot of challenges with players being injured, exams, and so on. "So, the camp was to give them an opportunity to see what we do in the national team. "We need to make sure that we bring them in slowly. We are very excited about their development and growth in that short time," Ellis said.



The Adjustment Budget can also be accessed through municipal website: www.mopani.gov.za

Enquiries may be directed to Mr. Motau TL @ Tel. 015-811 6300 during office hours from 08H00 to 16H30.

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