

South African union defends bribery suspects

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The South African Football Players Union is 'very disturbed' by accusations against footballers made by club managers, who accuse them of taking bribe to throw games.

First it was Maritzburg United who accused Dikuli Bageta (photo) of deliberately missing a penalty against Mpumalanga Black Aces. On Wednesday 10 February the 31-year old DR Congo international missed from the spot. His team lost 1-0 and the defender was blamed. He was suspended, confirmed club owner Afzal Khan: 'It is true that Dikulu has been suspended by the club pending the outcome of an investigation.'



Then news about Esau Mtsweni followed. He was the next

victim, after his team Thanda Royal Zulu lost to Hanover Park, 3-2, on Saturday 6 February in Durban's First Division. 'What happened is that I made a mistake from which the opponents went on to score. After the game my blunder became a huge issue, with me being accused of some unprintable and unprofessional things. They said they were going to do a lie detector test to determine whether I had intentionally thrown the game.'

Mtsweni was told by a club official to stay away from training, which he has done since. 'At this stage I am still waiting to hear from the club as they haven't gotten back to me.' Thanda's managing director Nata sha Tsihlas did not confirm the suspension of Mtsweni. 'All the players in our team have been given time off by the coach.'

SAFPU reacted angrily on the situation of Dikulu and Mtsweni via a firm press release. 'It is very unprofessional and totally nonsensical that these clubs are accusing our members of taking bribes. We are not going to allow individuals to maliciously damage the excellent work the players are doing, by coming up with unfounded allegations.'

'As SAFPU, we urge the Premier Soccer League to investigate this bribery allegation thoroughly and charge the culprits. It is not right for clubs to make match fixing allegations and proceed to conduct polygraph tests on our members without carrying out impartial and exhaustive investigations as this is grossly unfair and does not reflect well on our football.'