



Mzansi MAGIC

Struggle, Betrayal & Glory
The Story of South African Soccer

Joe Latakgomo

JOE LATAKGOMO

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TAFELBERG

Tafelberg,
an imprint of NB Publishers,
40 Heerengracht, Cape Town, 8001
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Cover design by Michelle Staples
Typesetting by Nielfa Cassiem-Carelse
Editing by Linda Pretorius
Proofreading by Glynne Newlands
Cover photograph Gallo Images
Printed in South Africa by Interpak Books, Pietermaritzburg

First edition, first impression 2010

ISBN: 978-0-624-04781-0

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To my wife Angie.
Thanks for your love and understanding
during difficult times in my life.
To the memory of Ellen.

*Some people think football is a matter of
life and death. I don't like that attitude.
I can assure them it is much more serious than that.*

BILL SHANKLY,
former Scottish International
and former Liverpool FC manager

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Foreword

A few months ago I read with great interest an entertaining and most informative book, *How Soccer Explains the World*, by American author Franklin Foer. It would not have been out of place if Joe Latakgomo's narration was called *How Soccer Explains South Africa*.

Football has always and will continue to evoke passion – it manifests in the intensity, violence and artistry of the game. But it is the overwhelmingly superb performances by soccer stars worldwide that has earned football the title of 'The Beautiful Game'. This aspect of the game is abundantly reflected in the lives of nearly all South Africans.

Football, generally known as soccer in our country, is deeply ingrained in our daily lives. It is a constant talking point in our media. Newspapers use soccer stories to boost their circulation figures. Politicians from opposing parties hug each other when our national or club sides achieve international glory. Sadly, nowadays the glory days seem so few and so far apart.

When political activity was suppressed by the South African apartheid regime, sport became the major forum to expose the country's racist laws. South Africa's sports isolation demoralised the country's white population to such an extent that the apartheid laws were amended to appease international opinion so that whites could be re-integrated into world sport. In effect, sport caused the first fissures in the apartheid wall.

Although soccer had its share of government collaborators, it was soccer's determination to steadfastly stand for equality that frustrated the propagators of racism in our country and