

Putting Gauteng on the tourism map

The inaugural International Legends Soccer Tournament held at the Ellis Park Stadium in Johannesburg on Saturday 7 January 2006 broke the Ellis Park record of media attendance - the 180 media institutions that registered included representatives from Holland, Bulgaria, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, The Middle East, Nigeria and Zambia.

Gauteng Tourism Authority (GTA) Chief Executive Officer Advocate Cawe Mahlali says the tournament placed Gauteng at the centre stage of yet another global sporting event and endorsed the province as a top-of-mind, global sporting destination in the run-up to the 2010 Soccer World Cup.

"The tournament brought together some 50 of the world's best soccer players ever to grace the world stage. They included Ruud Gullit, Roberto de Matteo, George Weah, Anthony Baffoe, Lucas Radebe, Aron Winter and Kalusha Bwalya. The fact that the tournament was broadcast live across the world to billions of soccer lovers exposed Gauteng to a global audience."

Tournament founder and captain of the African legends, Kalusha Bwalya says never before has an opportunity of this magnitude presented itself on African soil: "We have all forfeited appearance fees because of our undying passion for Nelson Mandela and his children's fund, raising money for a deserving cause and in so doing, touching each and every soccer loving heart, using soccer as a social upliftment vehicle for the country's disadvantaged people."

Mahlali says besides partnering with a very worthy event, the tournament was an opportunity to showcase Gauteng's excellent sports facilities and tremendous tourist offerings: "Predictions are that the 2010 Soccer World Cup Tournament will lead to direct expenditure of R 12,7 billion and will contribute R 21,3 billion to the GDP of South Africa. In this light, the GTA has identified global sporting spectacles, such as the Legends Tournament, as a core focus area in its strategy to enhance the Gauteng brand."