

Barnstone in the Lions' den...



In a football crazy year and a country where rugby is ever growing as a democratically supported sport – especially now that we have two teams in Super 14 home semi-finals – the concept “Lions and sport” conjures up images of a record losing streak. That is of one negates that other great sport which we’re supposed to be so good at – despite never getting close to ICC finals – the gentleman’s game of cricket.

Since 2008 Barnstone has thrown in their weight with the Bizhub Highveld Lions cricket franchise in the form of Deon Crafford acting as High Performance Consultant. You’d be justified to ask what exactly a High Performance Consultant does, even though the answer is not much different to what we generally do as advisors to the business world. In his role as High Performance Consultant to the team, Deon focuses on assisting the coaching staff to ensure an optimal playing and performance environment for the team. This includes input into the team dynamics, the leadership of the team, the relationship between the management team and the players and where required by the players, individual consultation as to performance improvement strategies.

Deon’s involvement with sport and especially cricket was founded on a 10 year stint as the mental coach and consultant to the Nashua Titans cricket franchise from 1995 to 2005, the last three years working with Dave Nosworthy as the head coach. When Dave returned to South Africa after three highly successful years as the coach of Canterbury in New Zealand, he asked Deon to rejoin his management team in the challenge of taking the Bizhub Highveld Lions to the levels of the legendary “Mean Machine”, which used to dominate the South African cricket scene.

The Bizhub Highveld Lions is a team of exciting youngsters blended with the maturity and experience of old campaigners like Neil McKenzie and Stephen Cook. It has also become a team with diverse South African roots in having players from the Free State, the Western Cape, Kwazulu-Natal and a couple from the other side of the Jukskei river. This year was an exciting year for the team in many respects – not least of which was making the Champions League to be played in September, where they will pit their talents against the best of Australia, New Zealand, England and the IPL. This year also saw Stephen Cook hit all time SA first class innings record of 390 runs.

This team is certainly going places and Barnstone is proud to be associated with the squad on the road to restoring the erstwhile greatness of the Johannesburg based cricket juggernaut.