

FOOTBALL

The 2009/10 beMOBILE Premier League has experienced numerous challenges. There has been shortage of playing fields, constant interruptions of the schedule, congestion of games and sponsors not being able to activate promotional activities among others. However, the league will be finished on time.

Although happy about the way the league is going, sponsors at beMOBILE, a subsidiary of Botswana Telecommunications Corporation (BTC) are concerned that they have not been able to get the full mileage they desired.

BTC's head of marketing and communication, Anno Tshipa, told *BG Sport* that as

sponsors they are relatively happy with how the league is going. "We had hoped that the challenges we experienced last season, particularly those regarding playing grounds and the issue of broadcasting, would be have been sorted. We did not anticipate that we would still be facing such problems. There has not been a broadcast from the north, save for one game at the beginning of the season. Although it is encouraging that there are some live midweek broadcasts, we have to realise that this is a national league and it is not good that games played in the north are not televised live," she said.

She added, "The other challenge is for both of us to do more to make stars out of players because as we speak now we are trying to turn our football professional. We do not appear



Tshipa

to be preparing players to be able to handle themselves professionally both in and out of the league. This can be a career, both parties have not done enough in that regard."

For his part, Premier League manager, Set-

ete Phuthego admitted that the congestions in fixtures had resulted in most clubs playing mid week games outside their area, which compounded their financial challenges.

"We do not help the team for playing outside the station because we are facing serious financial challenges and because of that we are not in a position to help our respective clubs," he said.

He blamed the congestion of football activities on the participation of the senior national team in various competitions, as well as the participation of Gaborone United and Uniao Flamengo Santos in continental competitions. BDF XI and Centre Chiefs have been the main contributors to the Zebras and thus have also been adversely affected.

"The challenge still continues as long as GU continue to participate in continental club championships".

He revealed that there is a cordial relationship between the Referees Commission and the PL citing the inclusion of referees in the Nike sponsorship. The PL continues to engage the commission regarding the referees' performance, their welfare and any other issues that are of relevance to the two parties, he said.

Setete said he was optimistic that that the league would finish on schedule. "We believe that with the cooperation we have received from clubs, and the continued sacrifices our clubs and stakeholders continue to make, we will achieve our objective of finishing the league on May 16," he said.

He argued that the importance of finishing the league in May was not primarily because of the World Cup in South Africa, but because this will allow the players enough rest during the off-season.

So far the teams are left with eight games at the most, before they wrap up the season, and it will take a miracle for Township Rollers not to lift the converted trophy to become the second team to win the P1 million prize after GU. They are currently leading the pack with a 13-point lead ahead of second-placed Center Chiefs.

At the bottom, it still remains to be seen