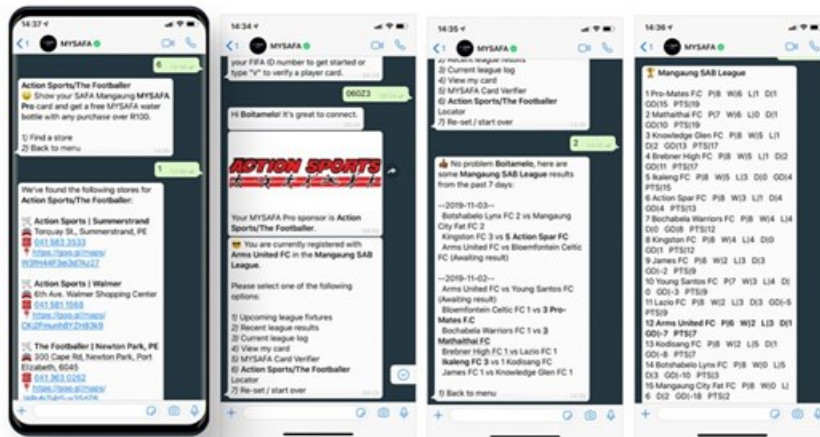


# SAFA changes the game for world football

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The South African Football Association has partnered with Inqaku and Praekelt.com to launch a WhatsApp chat service that gives thousands of FIFA-registered footballers and amateur clubs the information they need to get on with the game. Not only is this a first in South Africa, but it makes SAFA the first football association in the world to integrate its membership system and allow player verification on WhatsApp.



“With the growth of MYSAFA and its new connection to WhatsApp, the Association is no longer just following global sport innovations, we are driving them,” said SAFA President Danny Jordaan.

When we hear the name SAFA, we tend to think of Bafana Bafana and the few hundred players in the PSL, but the reality is that Inqaku and MYSAFA recently signed up over 330,000 players, logged 125,000 fixtures and has the potential to help tens of thousands of clubs across SA.

Each player on MYSAFA is issued with a FIFA ID number that acts as their digital passport and makes it easier for amateur clubs to claim Solidarity Payments – 5% of international transfer fees that are due to clubs that big-time players represented before the age of 23. Over the past 10 years, more than \$1 billion in solidarity payments and training compensation has gone unpaid.

The flagship feature of the MYSAFA WhatsApp chat service is the verification of player ID cards. Now, match officials, coaches and supporters can use WhatsApp to check whether the players on the pitch during a high-stakes match are the ones that are registered and cleared to play.

MYSAFA’s WhatsApp platform was built with Praekelt.com’s Feersum Engine, an AI-powered conversational interface that creates Intelligent Assistants with the ability to reach millions of users through automated messaging. While MYSAFA’s current offering delivers card verification, fixtures, results, league tables, and player information to the current user base, **future releases will have many more features and the potential to reach over 2.5 million amateur footballers and 27 million fans in South Africa.**

We could soon see field locators, team chat, fan clubs, anti-cheating capabilities, insurance benefits, discounted purchases, commentary, and crowd-sourced results that expand the user base to administrators and supporters of local football.

The first feature set is being trialed in English in Nelson Mandela Bay, and could soon be available 10 other languages thanks to Natural Language Understanding.

"Once again we are thrilled to lead the way with another SAFA digital initiative," said SAFA NMB President, Simphiwe Mkhangelwa. "I expect that every one of our players will be checking their fixtures and logs on at least a weekly basis."

#### Editorial contact

Praekelt's Feersum Engine is an AI-powered conversational platform that builds Intelligent Assistants with the ability to chat to millions of users in multiple local languages. For media and other queries please contact Stef Adonis at [stef@praekelt.com](mailto:stef@praekelt.com)

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