

MEDIA RELEASE

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City Team Base Camp in Perspective

I would like to add some perspective with regard media articles speculating on the hosting of the Cameroon national team by Buffalo City Municipality.

Buffalo City Municipality began the lobbying process to be a Team Base Camp and Training Venue for 2010 FIFA World Cup long before any national team (other than Bafana Bafana) had qualified for the tournament.

Through this exercise we liaised closely with the FIFA 2010 LOC and MATCH (the FIFA entity responsible for ticketing, accommodation and Team Base Camps) about positioning the city in this regard. After several visits to East London on the part of a MATCH official it was indicated that given the compactness of East London the identified Training venues should be fine however he was of the firm view that Blue Lagoon was the likely option for a football world cup Team Base Camp and a very good one at that. We should remember that this hotel was the base camp of choice for the Italian team during the 1995 Rugby World Cup.

The hotel was therefore the first Buffalo City property to be accredited to FIFA i.e. appear in the Official FIFA catalogue of Team Base Camp properties in South Africa. Incidentally, of the over 60 potential venues from both coastal and inland base camps East London was in the first 14 registered. Eventually both Blue Lagoon and Premier Cascades were contracted by MATCH as coastal venues.

In the case of the Blue Lagoon the contract between the hotel and FIFA was signed on 11 September 2008 with an expiry date of 15 February 2010, the official deadline for teams to confirm their choices. On 9 February 2010 the hotel received a letter from FIFA officially notifying them that the selection process of Team Base Camps was completed and due to the fact that Blue Lagoon had not been officially selected they would release the hotel from the contract.

It is important to understand therefore that the Blue Lagoon Team Base Camp was one of the first sea level venues in the country to be FIFA accredited; it was fully accredited through every deadline (starting December 2009 to 15 February 2010). Any team wanting to base themselves in East London would simply have to re-negotiate the contract. Even with a lapsed contract the hotel still meets FIFA accreditation requirements for any team that had genuine interests in basing themselves in East London.

The apparent Cameroon destination of choice, the Oyster Box Hotel and a School/College Training Venue in Mhlanga is not really our concern except to say for most of the time that Blue Lagoon was on the official FIFA list as Team Base Camp the Oyster Box was not officially designated a Team Base Camp (for teams) and to date you cannot begin to compare a college establishment with the Buffalo City Stadium with regard to FIFA's 'stringent requirements' for a Training Venue.

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To date we have not received any formal communication from the Cameroon government indicating that they have not chosen East London.

It is therefore time to move on in 2010, push with our other projects and rejoice that the city's 'mainstays' remain loyal to us. We have a long awaited Springbok Test Match looming in June - the Italian team seemingly can't wait to return to their traditional base camp in Beacon Bay, it looks all set to get the 'mother of all boxing matches' in the city later this month as Nkosinathi Joyi prepares to battle for a prestigious IBF Title at home and when all the excitement of 2010 has died down we can look forward to continuing to be a national and international destination of choice for top class cricket.

- Ends -

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