



SEKHUKHUNE
District Municipality

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Office of the Executive Mayor

SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF SEKHUKHUNE DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY CLLR JULIA LATA MATHEBE ON THE OCCASION OF “THE EXECUTIVE MAYOR’S CUP”, HELD ON THE 29TH OF JUNE 2022, AT GROBLERSDAL RUGBY STADIUM, ELIAS MOTSOLEDI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY.

Thobela

Good morning

Programme director,

A few months leading to this day one could easily see that one subject dominated: “the Executive Mayor’s Cup”. This was because the pandemic had nearly succeeded in a great divorce from one another; friends and relatives suffered isolation. It created the most unusual silence and like a strict, boring parent it grounded us.

With your prayers and more we hope this year it will certainly be different. You are therefore individually called upon to make a difference you wish for; this is to say: please, please let us observe and heed any chances of this disease messing us again. Strive to be Covid-free whenever, wherever and whatever it takes. It is not a dream that you are here today... it is real!

While the crisis is far from over, we can see already now that Sport is widely recognised as an essential factor in fighting the pandemic and as an integral part of the solution to recover from the crisis. We are all still learning every day.

But I hope very much that the first lesson from this crisis has been learned. And that lesson is: we need more solidarity; solidarity within people. Solidarity is at the heart of the Sports, Art and Culture which can unite us in all diversity.

Programme director,

In these difficult times, we need the Sport values more than ever. With these values, Sport is ready to contribute to rebuild a more human-centred and inclusive society. Sport and physical activity contribute directly to physical and mental health and to combat non-communicable diseases. Sport can save lives. We have seen this over the last two years, in particular in times of lockdown, social distancing and insecurity.

The coronavirus crisis has made it very clear: Sport can be key to enable authorities to deliver on their economic and social policy agenda in a post-coronavirus world.

It is my sincere hope that the public authorities together with business do not lose sight of the important social role of Sport by equating it with commercial Sports business. If only the economic rules are applied to measure the impact of Sport on society, then the social mission of Sport is lost. Sport is about so much more than business.

Sport has a great social significance by being the glue which bonds communities together. It promotes inclusivity because too often Sport is the only activity that unites people regardless of their social,

political, religious or cultural background. Such inclusivity is even more important in otherwise deeply unequal society.

Sport plays a significant economic role, creating jobs and generating business activity. In South Africa, for example, research shows that Sport related activities contributes more 2% to GDP, a contribution which makes Sport economically important among a number of more traditional economic sectors.

It is for these reasons among many more that we include Sport in our post-corona support programmes. The scope of this project is far reaching; its relevance is beyond targeted aim; summarized by me as: the major youth development instrument in the district, and its main aim is talent identification, nurturing, promotion and marketing of players to the elite structures.

Ladies and gentlemen in the next minute or so let me play... play with words. While at your mercy... allow me to show my sportsmanship and in the same token allow me to speak like a sport commentator, an artist or a poet.

Indeed Sport is a global event which has brought people from all around the world, across all boundaries into one and the same place for the soul, where they are united by hopes, anxieties, passions and joy, all at once. Hardly any other event on earth can achieve a similar widespread effect. That shows that it must address something inborn and ancient inside us and leads us to ask: where the power of Sport lies?

Programme director,

The ignorant would say: "Food and play make up the lifestyle of a lazy society which does not have a higher goal". But even when one accepts this, it is not enough. One must then ask: What is the appeal

of play that it can have equal importance as food? The Economist will tell us that even play is among needs of life, in which the cry for bread and play is really the expression of a desire for a fulfilled life. Because that is what play means: an action that is truly free – sometimes with or without a goal and without a need to score one... while fulfilling all of one's internal forces.

In this sense, Sport becomes a sort of an escape; a stepping out of the false burden of our daily life and its concerns, into the free seriousness of something that should not be serious and is therefore beautiful. In that way then Sport overcomes daily life. But it has another character, especially with children or youth: It is a training for life. It symbolizes life itself carried forward in a blissful manner.

It seems to me the appeal of Sport consists of the fact that it unites life aspects in a very persuasive manner. It compels a man/woman to take themselves by hand so that through training, they may gain control over themselves; through control, mastery; and through mastery, freedom. It also teaches them, however, a disciplined cooperation with others.

In team Sport, they learn to put individuality in the service of the whole. Sport unites people in a common goal: the success and failure of each one lies in the success or failure of everyone.

Programme director,

And finally, Sport teaches fair competition, in which the rules of the game, which everyone mutually supports, binds and unites the competitors. Is this not a lesson for sound mental health?

How about the rest of us... the spectator? The freedom of playfulness and the seriousness of competition, resolves into the freedom of a completed game. In watching a game, we the spectator, identifies

with the game and the players. We feel part of both the team play and the competition; we participate in the players' seriousness and in their freedom of action. The players become a symbol of our own life; and that works vice-versa. The players know that the spectators are seeing themselves represented in them, being affirmed by them. Are we watching and ready to learn?

In both cases however, it means to find a discipline for freedom, to train oneself to follow the rules of teamwork, of competition and of self-discipline. Perhaps if we think of these, we can learn from Sport to live afresh. Because Sport makes fundamentals visible: Man does not live by bread alone. Yes, the material world is only the first stage for the truly human, the world of true giving and freedom. But that freedom is also based on rules, on the discipline of teamwork and fair competition, independent of outward success or randomness, and is therefore truly free. If we look at it deeply, then the wonder of a Sport as life can give us more than pure entertainment.

Of course, all of this can be spoiled by commercialization which casts the grey cloud of money over everything, and changes Sport into an industry which can produce an unreal world of horrifying dimensions. But this unreal world cannot exist when Sport is based on positive values: as training for life and as a stepping over from our daily life in the direction of our lost blissful world.

Programme director,

In these difficult times, the values-driven Sporting Model like this one can make a significant contribution to the recovery by mobilising volunteers and by promoting more solidarity within communities,

regions, districts and provinces; among countries and also among popular and less popular Sports.

The unifying power of Sport will have an even more significant role to play. While this is true... delivering on the priorities of this scheduled Sporting model like the “Executive Mayor’s Cup” requires unprecedented collective action from everyone and good governance is an area we can build on ongoing cooperation.

We are honoured to have the organizing and facilitation committee of the calibre and experience. We know that their plans will culminate the best of entertainment for all at this venue. After such dry and rusted season for sport activities our eyes await lubrication by great talent and excellence in each game today.

The best lift trophies and may all of us be winners today and going forward.

Programme director,

Allow me to end with a quote from one of our greatest statesma, Nelson Mandela who once said “ **Sport can create hope where once there was only despair. It is more powerful than governments in breaking down racial barriers. It laughs in the face of all types of discrimination.**”

LET THE GAMES BEGIN!!

Thank You very much.

I thank you

