

KZN Cricket Union pays tribute to MEC Dhlomo for his support for the game, and for empowering young cricketers with access to priority emergency healthcare

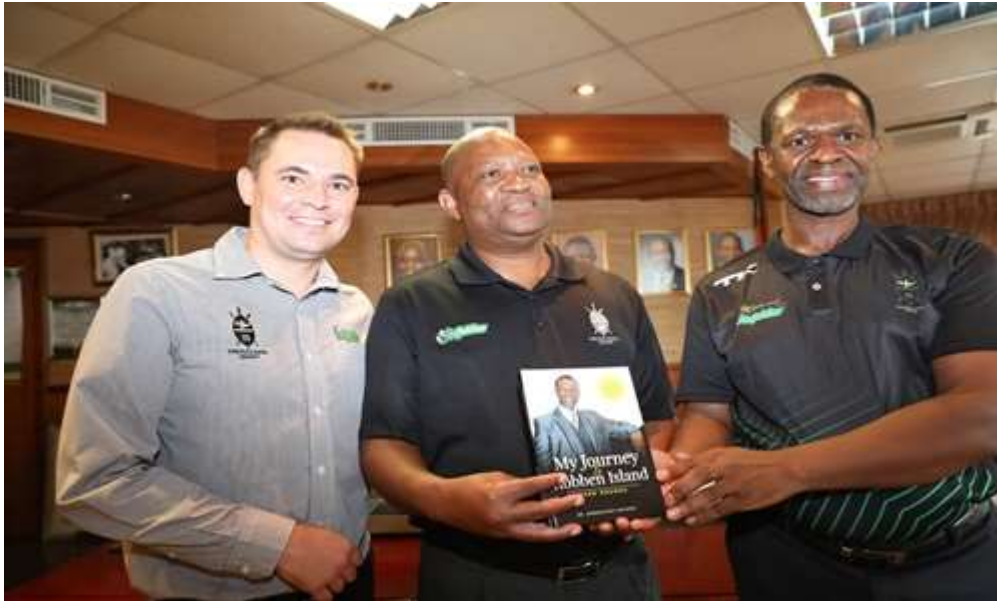
01 April 2019

The KZN Cricket Union (KZNCU) has paid tribute to provincial Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, thanking him for his overall support for cricket; his relentless promotion of a healthy lifestyle in the province; and for establishing a specialised emergency healthcare plan for poor young cricketers who do not have medical aid.

In terms of the plan, which was launched two months ago, the players receive priority healthcare at hospitals such as Prince Mshiyeni Memorial; King Edward VIII; Inkosi Albert Luthuli Central and many others. This is an attempt to put them on par with their counterparts from affluent homes, who are covered by their parents' medical aid. Earlier today, the KZNCU's President Mr Ben Dladla and CEO Mr Heinrich Strydom paid the MEC a visit at his Durban office. They handed him a framed photograph taken with King Goodwill Zwelithini during a recent match, and a personalised Dolphins cricket jersey with his athletics race number 7705 on the back.

MEC Dhlomo then gave the KZNCU copies of his recently-released book *My Journey to Robben Island: A Memoir of the Armed Struggle*. Dr Dhlomo, who is an active athlete and a proponent of healthy lifestyles, is wrapping up his tenure as the Health MEC, after serving two terms.

Explaining the reasoning behind the KZNCU's gesture, Mr Dladla said: *"We decided to thank the MEC for his undying support and unwavering commitment to the development of sport in general, and cricket in particular. We've had Dr Dhlomo attending most of our games when he's available. What has been more interesting and we've been quite grateful for is that he did not only concentrate on the Dolphins as a professional team, but he has also been with us at grassroots level, where everything is happening. We have a township development programme which he also support...not only by his presence, but also in terms of health issues by getting ambulances when we need them. Lately he's also assisted us by getting the hospitals to open their doors to these youngsters whom come from difficult backgrounds. In Cricket, just like in any other sports, players may sustain some injuries or ailments. Through all those endeavors from his side, we just thought as the KZN CU let's come and say 'thank you.'"*



MEC Dhlomo with KZNCU's President Mr Ben Dladla and CEO Mr Heinrich Strydom



His sentiments were echoed by KZNCU's President, Mr Strydom, who believes the MEC's ongoing support will contribute to the future success of young players. *"As KZN Cricket and the Dolphins, we are privileged by Dr Dhlomo's support to our structures, systems and the whole pipeline. Sport and healthy lifestyle go hand in hand, and I think the support we've received from the Honourable MEC has been incredible. Hopefully this will continue in future with our relationships with the KZN structures. From a cricketing perspective, we'd like to give back to our communities. We've been fortunate for having one of the biggest development programmes in South Africa and maybe even in Africa, and hopefully through the continued support from our the MEC, we'll be able to continue with this development programme, and give back to the communities, to get the healthy lifestyles programme going, and provide more and more Proteas for the future."*

MEC Dhlomo said he was immensely humbled by the visit, adding that it was rare for anyone to be visited by both the President and CEO of any organisation at the same time. Given the global increase in non-communicable diseases such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension and cancer, the MEC said healthy lifestyle was key towards improving the province's health outcomes. He vowed to continue to help young players through the hospital programme. *"To me, this is very humbling. There's a specific area just before these young players get to the Dolphins, where they are found wanting if they ever happen to get injured. You want them to recover quickly and get back to the*

game immediately by offering them the best health facilities that we have. We felt we had to close that gap. So, that partnership is up and running, and we'd want to consolidate that. It actually assists as health... to see leaders who are championing sport. Before you can excel in any sporting code, you have to start by exercising. You need a health body, which leads to a healthy mind. By getting young people involved in sport we benefit a lot as health, because you use less money when people are healthy and engaged in physical activity. That partnership goes in that way."

The MEC said he would be keeping the framed photograph and personalised Dolphins jersey on his mantelpiece as memorabilia.