

**T**he 13th icon in 21 Icons SA's second season is Lucas Radebe, a man who is hailed as one of the greatest international soccer players of our nation. Playing on the streets of Soweto as a youngster inspired his lifelong passion for the game.

In recognition of his roots and heritage, the portrait features Radebe in the traditional attire of a Zulu chief, which is fitting for a man who led the team he represented to success throughout his career. He epitomises strength and leadership.

In an intimate conversation, Radebe talks about his life as one of South Africa's most successful soccer exports. A former Bafana Bafana captain and dubbed The Chief of English Premier League side Leeds United, he has achieved great acclaim on many international soccer pitches as well as here at home. Nelson Mandela once referred to Radebe as "my hero" while visiting Leeds United during a trip to the UK.

Born into a family of 10 siblings, Radebe grew up in Diepkloof, Soweto. In this close-knit community, he recalls playing a variety of games - most notably soccer.

Realising his career dream in 1989, he was drafted to play for one of South Africa's most popular (and most

successful) soccer teams, Kaizer Chiefs, and his prowess and agility on the field soon gained him the reputation of being a formidable defender. The international football fraternity took notice.

After great success on South African soil, he traversed the oceans in 1994 to drizzly England on a transfer to Leeds United and was appointed captain of Leeds for the 1998/99 season.

His country was never far from his mind and in between his experience overseas, Radebe played with Bafana Bafana to win the Africa Cup of Nations in 1996.

This leading international sportsman hung up his boots and retired from professional soccer in 2005, but he went on to become an ambassador for the game on home soil.

Radebe, now South Africa's most capped soccer player, also has many successes off the field, including his work for a number of educational, social and charitable initiatives, including the Starfish Greathearts Foundation for HIV and Aids orphans and the Reach for a Dream Foundation. He has also served as the Fifa ambassador for the SOS Children's Villages. He received the Fifa Fair Play Award in December 2000 for his contribution to ridding soccer of racism as well as for his work with children in South Africa.

He is active in youth development, and works with various foundations and sports academies that empower young South Africans with various life skills, including the importance of honesty, hard work and education.

The presidency awarded him the Order of Ikhamanga (in silver) in 2005, the same year in which the universities

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# The Chief

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During the Africa Cup of Nations in 1996, I was honoured to wear the green-and-gold jersey of our country, and serve the national team and represent our country as captain. It was an unbelievable experience and a great achievement. I think for any soccer player, you want to represent your country, you want to play against the best in the world. I was fortunate that I did

that I did

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LUCAS RADEBE

HERITAGE Lucas Radebe is one of SA's most successful soccer exports

PHOTOS: GARY VAN WYK

of Cape Town and Leeds Metropolitan awarded him honorary master's and doctorate degrees.

In a career spanning more than two decades, he has risen to the heights of his chosen occupation, enhanced the image of his home continent's soccer players, fought against racism in sport, inspired hundreds of thousands of young fellow citizens and ploughed back the fruits of his endeavours into helping ill and deprived children not only in South Africa, but across the rest of the world.

- Watch Lucas Radebe today on SABC3 at 8:27pm
- For more information, visit 21icons.com



FOOTBALL FUNDI Lucas Radebe during the photoshoot in Khayelitsha, Cape Town, for photographer Adrian Steirn's 21 Icons project



PHOTO: ADRIAN STEIRN