



Women's Day South Africa - Women in Sport Leading the Way



WOMEN'S DAY '26
EMPOWERED WOMEN EMPOWER NATIONS



When we look at women in sports in South Africa it is hard to ignore a few. Over the years we have seen women shine in the male dominated field and be an inspiration to the next generation of women in sports.

Here are a the women in sport leading the way in South Africa...





Aimee Barrett-Theron

RUGBY



The first professional female rugby umpire in South Africa, Aimee's journey to being the most decorated female umpire started in 2005 playing rugby. She then went to play for the South African National side in both the 15s and 7s circuit. Barrett-Theron last played for South Africa in the 2009 World Rugby Sevens World Cup and in the 2010 Women's Rugby World Cup before transitioning to officiating in 2014. She made her Test officiating debut in 2016 and since then she has made groundbreaking achievements in the game. She is the first woman to take charge of Currie Cup, Super Rugby and United Rugby Championship matches, all male competitions played internationally and in South Africa.

She also became the first woman to referee a men's match in South Africa and is currently the most capped female referee having taken charge of 52 Tests. Aimee was recently diagnosed with breast cancer in July of 2026 and has stepped down from officiating for the foreseeable future. She has said that refereeing has taught her a lot about resilience, discipline, pressure and backing yourself when things are tough and she is approaching her diagnoses the same way she approaches high-performance environments. She is determined to get through this and return to the field stronger.



Motshidiso Mohono

RUGBY



The First Woman of Rugby, a pioneer and game changer. Mohono is an award winning sport broadcaster and sports journalist.

She started her journey in sports casting in 2011 when she auditioned for SuperSport's Lady in Rugga presenter search and since then she become the voice of rugby in the country. She has covered major rugby tournaments in the country from SuperSport SuperFans, Blitz Live, Varsity Cup, Craven Week, Currie Cup, British and Irish Tours, Super Rugby, Laureus World Sports Awards as well as The Men's Rugby World Cup

Since her start Motshidisi has been an inspiration to women all over the world taking reign and anchoring rugby panels that were mainly all male. She's stated that every production, no matter how 'small' was an opportunity to get better and she has grown both as a broadcaster and as a woman in the past 15 years. She is a Laureus Sport ambassador and can be found anchoring Springbok matches during the South African test season. 15 years in the game she is truly a broadcasting icon, fashion icon and an inspiration to girls looking to work in sports and break barriers in a male dominated industry.



Kass Naidoo

CRICKET



South Africa's first female television cricket commentator Kass Naidoo has been the voice behind South African cricket and women's sports for the past 23 years.

Having worked in sports Kass saw the opportunity to uplift other women in the game and founded the online initiative gsport. Gsport has promoted and celebrated women's sport in South Africa for over 20 years, allowing women working in the industry to be recognised for their hard work and also show the next generation that there is a space for women in all aspects of the game.

As an international cricket broadcaster Kass has hosted and commentated for many tournaments including ICC World Cups, The Hundred, SA20 and the Pakistan Super League.

She made history as the first woman television cricket commentator in South Africa in 2005, and has since mentored and inspired many aspiring women sports broadcasters.



Dr Desiree Ellis

SOCCKER



After taking charge of the South African Women's Football team in 2016 Desiree Ellis has reached new heights with Banyana Banyana.

Starting with her playing career Desiree played club soccer for over 24 years and made her international debut for South Africa in 1993, this was the first women's match for the country where she scored a hat-trick in the side's historic 14-0 victory over Eswatini. She captained Banyana Banyana to an WAFCON final in 2000 and a COSAFA Cup in 2002 before retiring in April of the same year. In her youth Desiree played football with boys defying gender and racial barriers that plagued the country.

She moved to coaching and has since been instrumental in Banyana Banyana's growth. Ellis became the first woman of colour to take charge of Banyana Banyana, but also the first former Banyana player to take the role in 2016.

In 2019 she coached the side in their first ever appearance in the FIFA Women's World Cup and made back to back qualifications in 2023. The side made history by reaching the knockout stage of the tournament building on their moment of their 2022 WAFCON Championship.

Ellis has went to win CAF Coach of the Year numerous times. She received an honorary doctorate from CPUT, a university in her home city for the work she has done in sports and to rise from the tough circumstances. She then received the Order of Ikhamanga – awarded to South African citizens who have excelled in the fields of arts, culture, literature, music, journalism or sport by the President of South Africa.