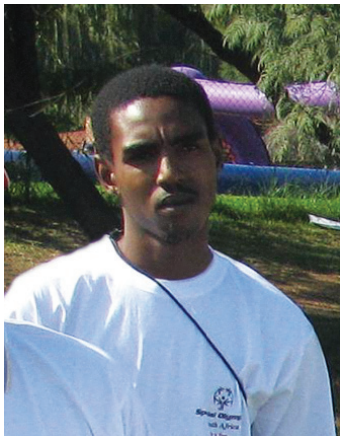
A T H L E T E P R O F I L E

Special Olympics UNITY CUP PRESENTED BY Coca-Cola

3 JULY 2010 • CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

PHILANI NGWANE



AGE: 20

HOMETOWN: Durban

COUNTRY: South Africa

POSITION: Midfielder

STORY: Philani's love of football has motivated him to be the best person he can be, amidst all the things that have happened to him in his life. Philani grew up in dire poverty. His parents were unemployed and physically abused him as they never accepted the challenges he faced due to his intellectual disability. He had a sister, who also suffered with a disability, but she passed away when she was only nine. He coped with a troubled home and had to endure both of his parents dying within the last three years.

Beyond his physical circumstances and his intellectual disability, Philani also suffers from asthma. Yet his love of football and his involvement with Special Olympics has kept his spirits up.

Philani really enjoys his time with Special Olympics, playing football, floor hockey and also swimming. He has also started to coach a local team and hopes to someday become a full-time Special Olympics South Africa football coach. Philani has played football for more than 10 years as a midfielder and keeps practicing to improve his skills. His coaches describe him as very confident, ambitious and determined.

The 20 year-old currently lives with his grandmother in Durban, South Africa, and always helps her out with chores around the house when he is not playing football or enjoying time with his friends. Philani says that Special Olympics has provided him the opportunity to travel, make friends, and most importantly to keep busy and off the streets. He is excited to welcome his fellow Special Olympics teammates to join him in the Unity Cup in South Africa.