



Communication and Marketing Department  
Isebe loThungelwano neNtengiso  
Kommunikasie en Bemerkingsdepartement

Private Bag X3, Rondebosch 7701, South Africa  
Welgelegen House, Chapel Road Extension, Rosebank, Cape Town  
Tel: +27 (0) 21 650 5427/5428/5674 Fax: +27 (0) 21 650 5628

[www.uct.ac.za](http://www.uct.ac.za)

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## **UCT ParaSports club raises awareness on blind football**

The ParaSports club at the University of Cape Town (UCT) is on a mission to have blind football included as one of the university's official sporting codes. As one of the first steps towards achieving this goal, the club hosted a benchmarking webinar on the growth of the sport in other parts of the continent and for tips and advice on what UCT needs to do to get the ball rolling.

Muya Koloko, one of the founding members of the UCT ParaSports club and the organiser of the webinar, said that the club has been facilitating ongoing conversations with stakeholders on ways to include blind football as an official UCT sporting code.

He said that the club had earlier collaborated with the League of Friends of the Blind (LOFOB) to host a series of workshops to introduce both students and staff to the sport. He described the webinar as phase one of an ambitious endeavour to grow the sport on campus, in the province and eventually in the country.

"UCT is in a prime position to build not only blind football, but parasport in general. A university's place is to innovate, educate and improve. Sport is an easy way to build community connections and to make a lasting difference in the lives of people," Koloko said.

The next steps for the UCT ParaSports club are to further familiarise themselves with the sport, evaluate the opportunities and stumbling blocks and assess how best to integrate blind football as an official sport on campus.

Short-term plans are focused on collaborating with UCT Football and LOFOB to establish two blind football teams to play in a mini competition. The medium- to long-term goals, Koloko said, are to use the competition as a vehicle to drive awareness of the sport, and ultimately to host a Western Cape Blind Football League.

"So far, we're only at step one, which is us trying to create awareness of the sport. Once that awareness grows and the situation allows, we plan on pushing integrated friendly matches to get as many players with or without visual impairments to try the game and gain interest."

Koloko said that the club hopes to host a blind football clinic during the course of 2021, depending on the COVID-19 pandemic. The University of Venda and Nelson Mandela University have been earmarked to be part of the event.

He said that formalising the partnership with LOFOB and other stakeholders will be a priority in order to facilitate blind football friendly matches featuring blended teams of players. “We have started the work and hope to have a stable foundation by 2023. At UCT we have the human, financial and physical resources to make this happen and to provide opportunities for sport for all in our community.”



The UCT ParaSports club is developing blind football.

Photo:Supplied

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***ENDS***

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**Ridovhona Mbulaheni**

Media Liaison Assistant  
Communication and Marketing Department  
University of Cape Town  
Rondebosch  
Tel: (021) 650 2333  
Cell: (064) 905 3807  
Email: [ridovhona.mbulaheni@uct.ac.za](mailto:ridovhona.mbulaheni@uct.ac.za)  
Website: [www.uct.ac.za](http://www.uct.ac.za)