**Maritzburg United players struck by lightning [South Africa]**

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The Witness

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A promising Maritzburg United youngster is fighting for his life in a local hospital after being struck by lightning during a training session near Harry Gwala Stadium in Pietermaritzburg on Thursday afternoon.

By late last night, there was no official word on the condition of 21-year-old Luyanda Ntshangase, whom sources said was being treated at the intensive care unit (ICU) at MediClinic.

Visibly shocked Maritzburg United players, technical team, management and Ntshangase’s family comforted each on the hospital premises while waiting for an update on the young striker’s condition.

Ntshangase, who previously represented SA at Under-20 level, was one of three local players injured in the lightning strike amid yesterday afternoon’s storm, during a friendly match against a local amateur side, Arsenal FC. The local side campaign in the SAB league and are based in Mafunze.

A club source said Ntshangase, who hails from Imbali township, was knocked unconscious and had to be resuscitated by the club’s medical staff before being taken to MediClinic for further medical treatment.

The other two players were treated by paramedics on scene.

A club official, who asked to be unnamed, said the teams were making their way back to the main stadium to find shelter when the lightning struck.

“The club played a friendly match against a local team earlier. Ntshangase and two other players from the opposition team were affected. The other two sustained minor injuries but Ntshangase is in a critical condition. Our medical staff started immediate CPR on him and thereafter was rushed to MediClinic where he received initial treatment at the emergency unit and was transferred to the intensive care unit for further care,” said the official.

Managing director and club chairperson Farook Kadodia said they had decided to abandon the match because of bad weather moments before Ntshangase was hit by lightning.

“There was no warning lightning or anything. We just heard a loud bang and the next minute the players were down on the ground. I am still shocked and all the players are still shocked,” he said.

Kadodia said Ntshangase had been taken for assessments and that the club were still waiting to hear from the doctors. “We pray that he recovers speedily. He is an important player for us,” he said.

A player, who asked not to be identified, said the incident had shaken the whole squad. “We were all walking together and all of a sudden, there was a loud bang. When I looked back, there were about four or five people who fell down. I thought we were going to die,” said the player.

Ntshangase is a regular player for the club’s Multichoice Diski Challenge team but he was promoted to the first team last season along with Bandile Shandu and Siphesihle Ndlovu.

He has made a several appearances for coach Fadlu Davids’ side in the Absa Premiership this season.

Family members who were at the hospital declined any interview requests.