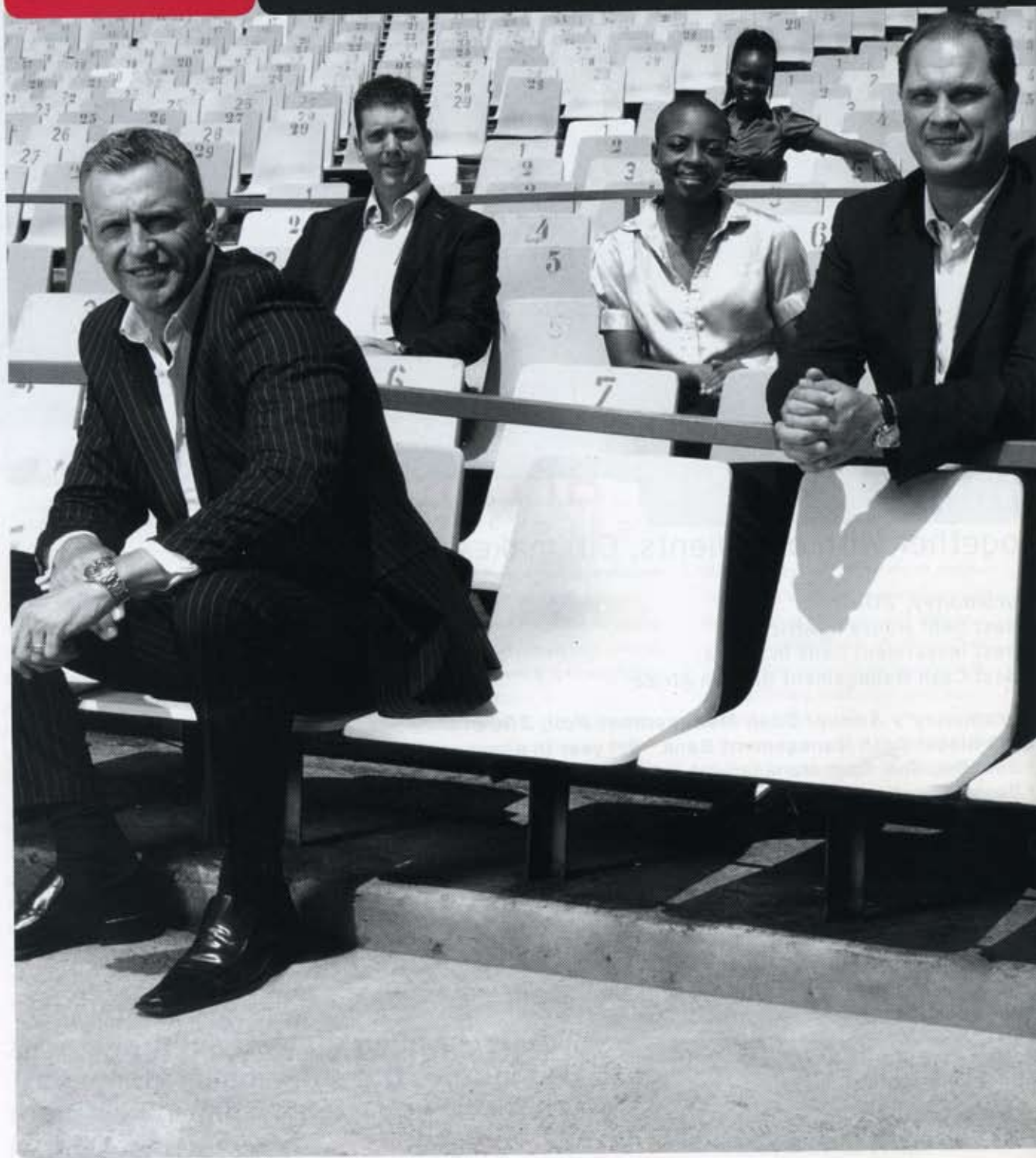


COVER  
INTERVIEW

## a match made in africa

One of the greatest contributions to the success of the 2010 Fifa World Cup will come from MATCH Hospitality AG – Fifa's world-wide exclusive rights holder of the Official Hospitality Programme. KERRY DIMMER reports





The MATCH Hospitality South Africa and sub-Sahara sales network team

**A good game of soccer is mostly dependent** on the amount of control a team has of the ball as well as the individual players' techniques. Together, these elements evoke in football fans the most intense of emotions: ecstasy and agony.

But it is the emotion of 'passion' that is most often linked to football, for without it the sport would not attract the world's greatest number of spectators.

It takes a huge amount of talent, expertise and professionalism to meet the extremely high and exacting criteria demanded by Fifa for this organisation to endorse business ventures applying for accreditation. It is therefore a great achievement for MATCH Hospitality to have been awarded Fifa's Official Hospitality Programme through to 2014.

Following its appointment, MATCH Hospitality selected a newly-formed South Africa Joint Venture company (SAJV) as its exclusive sales agent in South Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, responsible for both the 2009 Fifa Confederations Cup as well as the 2010 Fifa World Cup.

SAJV comprises CIRCA Hospitality (a SAIL Group company) and Warwick Hospitality & Events (a Primedia Group company), both of which have proven experience and a reputation for delivering successful and superior hospitality at major sporting events.

The merger of the two businesses, combined with Fifa's endorsement, allows for the use of the MATCH Hospitality name, aligned to MATCH Hospitality AG.

MATCH Hospitality AG, as Fifa's worldwide exclusive rights holder for the Fifa Hospitality Programme, appointed the SAJV as its exclusive hospitality sales agent in South Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, acting under the MATCH Hospitality umbrella.

MATCH Hospitality's executive chairman, Jaime Byrom, and its COO, Pascal Portes,



share the experience of several Fifa World Cups in this area and they are directly involved in the day-to-day management of the programme in South Africa.

Since receiving the endorsement last year, Lee Thomas, MD of MATCH Hospitality's South African and sub-Saharan sales network, says that the business is both financially and emotionally committed to the event and that it aims to deliver an exceptional corporate hospitality programme, unrivalled in the history of the Fifa World Cup. The SAJV partners have a history of delivering the goods. They've been involved with A1 Grand Prix motor sports, the British and Irish Lions Tours, rugby and cricket World Cups, premier golfing tournaments, and even cultural expos and summits.

'South African corporates are going to be amazed at where we will set the benchmark for hospitality of this standard,' says Thomas.

'Our exclusive rights status allows only MATCH Hospitality to market hospitality and this means the choice of three highly desirable hospitality package categories are available for all the events at all the stadiums.'

'These are premium packages and definitely the most prestigious way in which to enjoy the games,' says Thomas.

'We are targeting blue chip organisations because of the highly desirable nature of the event. The idea of corporate hospitality using the event to conduct business is far superior to watching the game on a big screen.

'Only a minuscule percentage of the total Fifa World Cup viewership will be able to experience the matches live, so why not be one of those corporates with a guaranteed hospitality package?'

MATCH Hospitality will offer three categories of hospitality packages from the highly coveted Private Suite package to the Shared Suite and

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Executive Hospitality packages.

Each package offers varying levels of hospitality and facilities, seat location and dining experiences.

In addition, these three categories of hospitality packages will be made available in a number of series. The Big Five Series includes Private Suite hospitality for every match in the five biggest stadiums.

The Gauteng Series includes the prestigious Private and Shared Suites at three of the biggest stadiums for 21 matches including the opening and the final games.

The Venue Series includes Private and Shared Suites covering all matches at a selected venue.

The Final Round Series includes two, three or four match combinations of the knockout games, including the final.

The Team Specific Series includes tickets to three group matches in support of a specific team or all matches played by a team of choice.

But like any major event, there will be ambush or rogue marketers. Many small companies will claim to have exclusive packages and services but the truth is that the deals they offer often don't even include a seat at a match. Thomas stresses that it is vital to only deal with the organisations that have official accreditation and can guarantee a place at the games.

MATCH Hospitality is accountable for everything it does, not only to Fifa but also to its shareholders.

'South Africans are always comparing themselves to the rest of the world. The 2010 Fifa World Cup is exactly what the country needs to showcase its vast array of talents and skills. The added benefit is that its neighbouring countries will also reap rewards from overflow opportunities.'

The 2009 Confederations Cup, also hosted by South Africa, will act as a dry run for the country to prove its mettle. Thomas says his team can't wait to share their world-class products and services.

'We will provide a standard of hospitality that the local market has never before experienced, from an organisational point of view and in showcasing a fusion of international and local cuisine from top chefs.'

MATCH Hospitality will also provide a legacy for catering staff and waiters working at the games by giving training certificates which will make them highly desirable employees for any business they wish to enter after the tournament.

Perhaps the impact of this event on South Africa and the African continent has not quite sunk in for the country and its people.

As to whether Africa is ready for the 2010 World Cup, Thomas says: 'Corporate Africa certainly is. This is a continent of educated, skilled people who believe in themselves and we are going to raise the bar. No one can afford not to be a part of these two great events.' **AD**