

Stars of Africa clinch 2017 Engen Champ of Champs

Stars of Africa clinched their maiden Engen Champ of Champs title on Sunday after a dramatic penalty shoot-out against Virginia Sports Academy.

The final, played at the High-Performance Football Stadium at the University of Pretoria, ended 1-1.

Stars of Africa and Virginia produced a game worthy of a cup final, with end-to-end action that kept fans on the edge of their seats.

Stars of Africa broke the deadlock in the first half, scoring with a well-placed shot after a patient build-up. The goal spurred Virginia Academy's determination, with the Free State team playing with renewed purpose in search of an equaliser.

A thunder storm halted the action two-minutes into the second half, with play only resuming thirty minutes later after the match officials deemed the conditions playable.

The break revitalised Virginia, who attacked the Stars defence at every opportunity. Their game-plan paid off with an equalising goal coming after they gained possession deep in their own half.

With the teams deadlocked after the final whistle, a penalty shoot-out followed. Players from both teams missed penalties in the mandatory five before the sudden death spot kicks arrived.

The Stars of Africa players held their nerve to produce the winning penalty kick, with their fans erupting in celebration as their bench stormed onto the field to congratulate the players.

Earlier, Stars beat a plucky Durban FC 2 – 0 in the semi-finals. In the other semi, Virginia beat SuperSport United 6 – 5 on penalties after the teams were locked at 2-2 after 90 minutes.

Over an action-packed weekend, six of the best youth teams in South Africa contested the 2017 Engen Champ of Champs.

In a first South African football, the final was broadcast live on official media partners, Soccer Laduma's Facebook page.

SuperSport United's Razeen Bennett was named as the 2017 Engen Champ of Champs 'Player of The Tournament'.

Tumelo Nkosi, of Stars of Africa was named the 2017 Engen Champ of Champs 'Goalkeeper of the Tournament', while the 'Top Goal Scorer of the Tournament' was shared by Jermaine George of Old Mutual Football Academy and Itumeleng Molebatsi of Virginia Academy.

All the individual award winners won a one-year endorsement from Engen Champ of Champs technical partners, Umbro

Speaking after the final, convener of the tournaments selectors, Duncan Crowie said: "We witnessed some great football this past weekend with scouts from local and international clubs, and agencies present, which is a clear indication of the status of this tournament."

"I trust that the Engen Knockout Challenge will again launch the professional football careers of many of these budding talents," added the Santos and Bafana Bafana legend.

Engen's Group Sponsorship Manager, Brad Bergh congratulated Stars of Africa Football Academy on winning the title.

"From Engen, it is my absolute pleasure to thank everyone for your support throughout the 2017 Engen Champ of Champs and Engen Knockout Challenge. We have seen some fantastic football over this past weekend and I can proudly say that it was "Youth Football at its Best.

"I believe that soon we will see players from this year's tournament performing at a professional level," added Bergh.