



Banyana Banyana defender Zamandosi Cele practises for the London Olympic Games. The DUT student, who is from Pietermaritzburg, will be participating in the games for the first time.

KZN Olympians set their sights on London gold rush

Lungelo Mkamba

A KWAZULU-NATAL student will be jetting off to the London Olympic Games as part of the national women's soccer team, Banyana Banyana.

Zamandosi Cele, 21, a Durban University of Technology (DUT) student, has been selected for the national squad as a defender.

Cele, of Willowfontain, near Pietermaritzburg, is a second-year public management student at the DUT Midlands campus.

She plays as a defender for the Durban Ladies' Soccer Club, as well as the DUT Midlands Women's Soccer Team.

Cele said yesterday she was "ecstatic" about making the team. "I am happy that I could convince the coaches of my talent and skill," she said.

Initially Cele was not selected. It was her performances for DUT which swung things in her favour, as Banyana Banyana's assistant coach, Matsobane Laka, spotted her during a match and decided to include her in the squad.

"I started playing soccer around the age of seven. I would tag along with my brothers when they had soccer matches near home. They also included me in their games," she said.

Asked how she was preparing for the Olympics, she said: "The team is currently at a training camp in Mpumalanga and we are working hard."

She added that her hard work had paid off.

"I am very excited. It will be a great opportunity and I hope the team does well."

Fathima Haffajee, director

of student services and development at the DUT Midlands campus said the university was "very proud" of Cele's achievement and wished her well for the Olympic Games.

"Cele is from an indigent family and has overcome tremendous odds in her quest to be the best.

"We can all be very proud of this exceptional DUT student," she said.

The university's sports officer, Mike Mbatha, described Cele as a shy student but a good listener and extremely dedicated.

● Durban's swimming sensation, Chad le Clos, is among the KZN athletes who will participate in the Olympics.

The Pinetown star qualified in all the events he participated in and will be racing in six events, which is an SA record for the Olympics.

He will swim individual medleys, the 400m and 200m, and both the 100m and 200m butterfly races.

● Lucas Sithole of Newcastle will represent the country in the London Paralympic Games which take place after the Olympics. Sithole is the country's number one ranked wheelchair tennis player.

He told The Mercury yesterday that he was training twice a day and was "a bit nervous" about participating in the games for the first time.

"I will do what I have to do for country and province," he said.

The list of all KZN athletes who would participate in the games would be released this week, the provincial sport and recreation spokesman, Mluleki Mntungwa, said yesterday.