

Not in the national interest



By Ashraf Garda: [@ashrafgarda1](#)

11 Aug 2010

Renaming Soccer City the National Stadium is not in the national interest! That's been [confirmed](#) by a high court judge who has ruled in favour of FNB in its battle with the National Stadium Management (NSM). And now that FNB has won the naming rights for the stadium, I am banking on it to do what's right and at least call the stadium FNB Soccer City.

Two weeks ago, the stadium management's Jacques Grobbelaar gave an indication of its about-turn when he chatted to me on my radio media and marketing show, Media@SAfm. Grobbelaar said it had been narrowed down to Soccer City and the Calabash. Up to that point - the stadium management had even advertised the upcoming Tri-Nations test between the Boks and the All Blacks to be played at the "National Stadium".

Goodwill brand stakes

FNB is set to revert to the original FNB Stadium; that is its right. However, it'll score higher in the goodwill brand stakes by voluntarily bringing in Soccer City to the stadium title and linking it to the bank.

Whoever thought the National Stadium was a suitable name for a sports venue?

The "national stadium" is a no-no for drumming up national fervour. It is bland, it's more Idi Amin than Siphwe Tshabalala, it is flat and it is an insult to the wonderful legacy that Soccer City has left us, post-2010.

Soccer City played host to the opening game, the final and that dramatic Ghanaian penalty shootout loss to Uruguay. Having worked so hard to build the brand, it is suicidal to kill one of the great symbols of the world cup.

Scene 'seen' no more

Just imagine this, a Ghanaian fan - here for the match against Bafana - sets his GPS to find Soccer City, only to get a "does not exist" response. "No Soccer City, no come back," he's bound to say as he reflects that that the scene of the world cup's greatest drama is 'seen' no more"

Maybe it's an academic discussion, now that FNB has won the day, but the argument that you cannot add "soccer" to the name of a stadium with designs on hosting rugby internationals and top billing music festivals just does not hold.

In fact, stadiums thrive on anomalous names: Eden Garden is the name given to India's largest cricket stadium; Derby County won the English football league title by playing its home games at the Baseball Ground; and rugby's Ellis Park has

played host to many great soccer games, including that terrific Confederations Cup Final comeback win for Brazil. Even Liverpool's famous Kop End is named after a battleground in the South African Anglo-Boer War.

Not a coincidence

So as far as sport goes - nostalgia is everything and anything is better than the national stadium. It's not a coincidence then that even the NSM and FNB preferred going head-to-head in their winner-takes-all battle at the "High Court" rather than the daft "National Stadium".

ABOUT ASHRAF GARDA: @ASHRAFGARDA1

I host the Special Assignment Investigative Journalism show Thursday 9.30pm on SABC 3 - and I present the Media@safrms show - Sundays 9-11am as well as Afternoon Talk on SAfrmRadio weekdays 2-4 pm

- [2011 trends] It's time to socialise - 25 Jan 2011
- Reflecting upon media and marketing trends in 2010 - 13 Dec 2010
- Not in the national interest - 11 Aug 2010
- Is this the new age? - 28 Jul 2010
- Sunday's Media@SAfrms show: Madiba and the media - 20 Jul 2010

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>