

# Big cash shot in the arm for Blue Bulls

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AS if dominating the local rugby scene last year by winning the Super 14 and Currie Cup was not enough, the Blue Bulls Company yesterday found that success does indeed breed success with one of their sponsors, Oasis Group Holdings, again agreeing to a multi-million rand five year deal – thought to in excess of R10 million – in Cape Town yesterday.

But although the Bulls' riches may now afford them a superstar or two in the next few years they will also be hard pressed to unearth more black rugby stars in the coming years to emulate the likes of Springboks Chiliboy Ralepelle and Akona Ndungane.

To this end, Oasis Marketing Director Nazeem Ebrahim yesterday stressed the need for the team to be demographically representative of the country.

“We are an international brand and we have chosen another international brand in the Bulls. We believe in development and transformation and we are looking at it from a structural point of view. We want to ensure that there is representation and the Bulls have an idea of how to do it. We want a team that is demographically representative of the country but we won't pressure numbers. We want equal opportunities for all players,” said Ebrahim, who was born in Marabastad.

“We support the transformation charter prescribed by SA Rugby totally. We realise that if we don't develop black players we will not have the Blue Bulls in years to come,” said Blue Bulls Company CEO Barend van Graan.

SA Rugby Union chief executive Johan Prinsloo concurred with Ebrahim.

He said transformation needed to happen in rugby or the dizzy heights that South African rugby reached last year will be the last. SA rugby boasted with the Webb Ellis trophy, Super 14, Melrose Cup for winning the IRB sevens series, the Unity Cup for the winning the British and Irish Lions series and the Tri-Nations and Mandela Plate.

“It is important that we look at grassroots. The face of South African rugby must look different 20 years down the line,” Prinsloo said.