

Polokwane stadium on track for 2009 deadline

Critical milestones have been reached and construction is running according to the construction schedule at the Peter Mokaba sports complex, in Polokwane, which is one of the venues that will host matches during the 2010 soccer World Cup.

The construction of the stadium is being overseen by Seloane Consulting, of Johannesburg. Project manager Refiloe Mallela says, Construction is going well. We have just completed the bulk excavation of the site.

The next milestone to be reached by the company is the construction of pillar bases and bases for the retaining wall. Work on this has not started yet as there is still blasting to be done to remove rocks on the site. As soon as we can get the rock cleared, we can begin work on the retaining walls and columns, says Mallela.

Despite this, the company is still confident that the project will be completed on time. Although the moving of the rock is time consuming at the moment, we will be finished with the project on time, he says.

The earthworks had to be finished by May, after which the foundation was to be poured.

Work on the stadium has not been without challenges as well.

In an earlier interview with Engineering News, Polokwane municipality communications manager Simon Mokoatedi cited new developments facing the building of new stadiums as a reason for delaying the announcement of the preferred bidder to construct the stadium, in January. The bidder was supposed to be finalised in the middle of January with construction work due to begin in February.

Once this was resolved, the municipality had to remedy a funding shortfall, an issue that also hampered the initiation of construction at Green Point stadium, in Cape Town.

The local and provincial governments in Limpopo had to manage the R158,3-million shortfall before the preferred bidder could move onto the site.

Mokoatedi reported that a special council meeting had to be held in order to resolve the shortfall. The council had adopted a report to commit the municipality to partially fund the shortfall for the appointment of a principal contractor to construct the stadium for the 2010 soccer World Cup.

The report recommended that the shortfall be resolved by an agreement between the Polokwane and Limpopo governments, each committing to funding 50% of the shortfall, amounting to R76,62-million each. Failure to tackle the cost overrun would result in the city being disqualified as host to hold soccer matches.

Polokwane managed to reduce the shortfall from R291,84-million to R153,8-million, through a re-engineering exercise.

The municipality has budgeted R716,78-million to build the Peter Mokaba sports complex, which is one of five new stadiums to be built for the 2010 tournament but cost overruns have delayed construction by almost two months.

Once completed, the new 45 000 permanent-seat facility will be the main venue in Limpopo province for major sports, political and musical entertainment events for decades to come. The Africon consortium design evokes a bushveld theme with four powerful baobab structural elements at the corners of the stadium to support the roof canopy. Inside each baobab, a lift shaft and two spiral ramps provide the primary vertical routes to and from the stands.

In addition to the four identical baobab structures, the lower tiers of all the stands as well as the upper tiers are virtually identical. The stands consist of reinforced concrete frames spaced at an average distance of 7,5 m around the perimeter. These frames have raked concrete beams on the seating side to support the precast concrete seating elements.

The same modular principle is evident in the roof structure. This has made it possible to proceed, without having to wait for full project funding, with the construction of the 8 300-m² roof over the western stand in accordance with the requirements of FIFA, the football association's governing body. As additional funds become available, the design has made provision for the other stands to be easily roofed over.

Essential services have been put in place at the stadium to ensure its sustainability beyond 2010.

The services include primary power generation for critical loads such as the sports field lighting, back-up power generation, security, fire and telecommunications systems, together with outdoor action replay screens, satellite and microwave communication systems and copper-wire and fibre-optic networks. Reliability has to be entrenched through the provision of double redundant power supply to the stadium and various double redundant telecommunication uplinks with the outside world.

About the Author

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