



Kansas City Wiz forward, Vitalis "Digital" Takawira, right, beats out a New England Revolution player in a race for the soccer ball Saturday. Tanna Kinnaman/DN

## MLS

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Takawira.

The 23-year-old forward from Zimbabwe is now leading MLS in shot-percentage, scoring on 88 percent of his shots on goal.

He is also a local soccer hero in a market that boasts a youth fan group that is more than 48,000 strong.

Takawira took a risk coming to the new league, a risk many players from around the world have not been willing to take.

"Most of the players that play in Europe want to come here, but don't because they heard the league wouldn't succeed," he said, standing in the Wiz locker room.

Takawira, who has played professionally in Europe and Africa, said MLS could not compete with the Italian Premier League or the German Bundesliga — the best leagues in the world.

But the man they call Digital for his precision and quick skill said the day when MLS is at the top of the world is coming.

And for the Samba Club, this season is also only the beginning.

Gilbert Teixeira, a Kansas City resident and Samba Club member, sat grinning behind the big bass drums and pounded out a rata-tatta on his snare drum.

It was late in the second half and the Wiz was winning. It was 4-2 now, and the Revolution was having trouble getting anything started on offense -- a relief for the Wiz defense, which has needed the most help this season.

The Samba Club had been pounding out its collection of beats for the whole game, only taking a break for halftime.

Teixeira has been out for all the home games this season. And, he said,



Wiz forward Alan Prampin (23) jumps into the crowd Saturday night for a victory hug. Marni Speck/DN

has been satisfied with the turnout.

"For the first year, it's been good," he said, shouting over the droning of the drums. "It's probably going to do better next year."

The crowds aren't the only thing that is going to improve, Teixeira said. As the season wears on, sports writers learn more about the sport new to most of them, and coverage improves.

"Those guys are afraid to talk about

soccer because they don't know the game yet," Teixeira said. "That's the feeling we (the Samba Club) got."

And the Samba Club itself is thinking bigger — about a van for road games and helping other teams.

"Our inside joke is if the (Major League baseball's Kansas City) Royals keep doing this bad, we're going to move next door (to Kauffman Stadium, home of the Royals)," he said.



Wiz forward Frank Klopas (14) and Revolution midfielder Peter Woodring (8) fight for control of the ball. Marni Speck/DN



Attending every Wiz game, rain or shine, Kevin Adkins, left, Joe Phillips and Tony Alonzo, all of Kansas City, tailgate Saturday. Loyal fans tailgate before the Kansas City Wiz game Saturday. Tanna Kinnaman/DN