



# Tough challenge ahead for Eagles

**NONDUMISO ZAKWE**

ROYAL Eagles stand-in coach Allan Freese expects another tough outing when his side host fellow promotion hopefuls Mbombela United in Clermont this afternoon, as they both look to cement their bids for the playoffs.

The sides will revive hostilities at 3 pm at the Sugar Ray Xulu Stadium.

The Pietermaritzburg-based troops are joint-fourth with AmaZulu and Witbank Spurs in the National First Division standings with 44 points from 28 matches, while "Tingwenyama" are placed seventh with 40 points.

Having racked up seven points from their last five league matches, Eagles are two points adrift of the playoffs zone that will see them possibly campaign in the Absa Premiership next season.

Their last outing was a 2-1 away win over Jomo Cosmos on the weekend and Freese, the 60-year-old mentor who is in charge of the club in sick head coach Kosta Papić's absence, feels his preparations have gone well.

Speaking to *The Witness* yesterday, the former Highlands Park boss said: "It's going to be a physical match, no doubt about that. We all have two games remaining and we both want the same thing, which is to cement our place in the top three.

"So we expect a difficult match. But I think we've prepared well ahead of the game. We're ready to fight and make our mark."

In head-to-head stats, Eagles and Mbombela have met in three league matches since 2015/16.

The visitors have one win compared to none for the home side, while two matches have been drawn.

The teams have not played out a goalless draw in any of their recent league meetings, with their most recent meeting ending in a 1-1 draw.

Freese insists his charges cannot afford to take Mbombela lightly.

"Every game is important for us. I cannot emphasise that enough. We'll be playing at home and it's important that we get all three points. I'm not expecting anything less than that," he said.

## TODAY'S FIXTURES:

Tuks v Leopards  
Santos v Spurs  
AmaZulu v Cosmos  
Thanda v FC Cape Town  
Milano v Stellenbosch  
Eagles v Mbombela  
Magesi v Real Kings  
Mthatha Bucks v All Stars  
All matches kick off at 3 pm  
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