



Old friends face off as Eagles tackle Highlands

By MTHOKOZISI MKHONZA

THERE was nothing much to write home about in the first week of National First Division (NFD) action – almost all the teams gave performances that were average at best.

The most interesting aspect of the weekend's matches was perhaps the brave displays by the two new teams – Uthongathi and Super Eagles from the ABC Motsepe League – who didn't lose by big margins to experienced sides, signalling their intent to compete.

In fact, Uthongathi held Allan Freese's Royal Eagles to a 1-1 draw.

Free State-based Super Eagles suffered a narrow 2-1 defeat at the hands of Witbank Spurs.

The pick of the upcoming weekend clashes is a battle between Royal Eagles and Highlands Park at Harry Gwala Stadium in KwaZulu-Natal on Saturday, which will pit Freese against his former assistant, Thierry Mulondzo.

Freese was frozen out by Highlands when he was at the reins during their one-season stint in the PSL.

Gordon Igesund has also been in the mix, getting axed before Mulondzo was roped in.

The Highlands coach agrees that their upcoming clash with Royal Eagles is set to spark fireworks, as Freese will be out to prove a point.

Highlands opened the season with a 1-0 win against Jomo Cosmos and are looking forward to their next match.

"The focus now is on our next game against Royal Eagles," said Mulondzo.

"It will be a tough game, there's a bit of sentiment, playing against my old friend (Freese).

"We all know that Royal Eagles are contenders to win the NFD title this year, but we are going there to give our best and get the result."

Only 15 goals were scored in this past weekend's eight encounters, with all victorious teams winning by a narrow one-goal advantage.

Added Mulondzo: "Starting the season on a winning note was important for us. We need to set the tone this early in the season. The first game was a sign of what we plan to achieve."

Coming up on Sunday, former Absa Premiership sides Jomo Cosmos and University of Pretoria will face off as Ezenkosi host AmaTuks in Vosloorus.

NFD FIXTURES

TOMORROW

Cape Town All Stars v Richards Bay FC (Athlone Stadium).

SATURDAY

Royal Eagles v Highlands Park (Harry Gwala Stadium); Real KingsFC v Witbank Spurs (Sugar Ray Xulu Stadium); Stellenbosch v Uthongathi (Athlone Stadium); Super Eagles v Mbombela (Goble Park).

SUNDAY

Black Leopards v Ubuntu (Giyani Stadium); Jomo Cosmos v AmaTuks (Vosloorus Stadium); Mthatha Bucks v Tshakhuma (Mthatha Stadium).

■ 3pm kick-off.

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