



We're up for the fight, insists Van Dyk

Wesley Botton

Port Elizabeth – Though she returns to the domestic showpiece with a new-look team, as the tournament reverts to an expanded district format, head coach Jenny van Dyk is confident her Tshwane side is ready for battle at the Spar National Netball Championships this week.

Van Dyk lifted the title last year with the Gauteng A side, when the tournament featured provincial teams, but Netball SA had opted to reopen the doors this season by hosting smaller district outfits.

And with experienced Proteas star Erin Burger being withdrawn

from the squad on the eve of the national championships, as a precautionary measure due to health concerns, they took a knock ahead of today's opening fixtures.

However, retaining the core group of players who beat the Western Cape in extra time in last year's final, Van Dyk hoped to return to the capital city with another trophy after guiding the Gauteng Jaguars to a successful title defence in the Netball Premier League in Pretoria last month, and winning the national student title with the Tuks team in Bloemfontein last week.

"This is a new tournament, a new team and a new opportunity for us to develop our players and

give them some much-needed match time," she said yesterday.

"We definitely didn't come here to finish second, so we will definitely play our best to defend our title, even though it's not really our title anymore."

The six-day national championships, taking place at the Lotto Young Park netball courts, features over 1 000 players representing a total of 87 teams in A and B divisions in the senior and Under-21 categories.

The senior A-division consists of 12 teams competing in two pools, with the best performing sides in the round robin stages progressing to the play-offs ahead of Saturday's final.

