

Maties coach isn't entertaining any thoughts of being title favourites

JACQUES VAN DER WESTHUYZEN

THE giant-killers of round one in this year's Varsity Cup, Wits University, are on home soil this week and up against the defending champions, the University of Pretoria, but it is a challenge their coach is looking forward to.

Led by the impressive Constant Beckerling at flank, Wits stunned the University of Cape Town at the Green Mile in round one, scoring two tries in the last 10 minutes to win 30-26 and get their campaign off to the perfect start.

They'll now have a target on their back and Tuks will be going all out to set the record straight, especially after they were shocked 19-17 last week, at home, by the University of the Free State.

Wily Wits coach Hugo van As is fully aware of the challenge facing his team, but he's hopeful of another giant-killing act. "We're grateful for the win last week but we performed below par in a number of areas," Van As said. "We're obviously excited about our first home game, but Tuks will be a tough opponent after they lost last week. They're a hugely-talented side."

In another intriguing match today, Stellenbosch University host Shimlas at the Danie Craven Stadium.

Maties were in sensational form last week, hammering the University of Johannesburg 31-3, away from home, and they'll be in confident mood heading into the round-two encounter.

The three-times champions and four-times runners-up, Maties, look like they're the early favourites for the title, but coach Hawies Fourie isn't entertaining any such thoughts. "Shimlas will pose totally different challenges than UJ did," Fourie said. "We're very happy with the start we made, winning away from home, but Shimlas play a different kind of game... they've got gutsy players who play with width, skill and intensity. They are well coached and will be on a high after their win against the defending champions."

Shimlas coach Hendro Scholtz described Maties as a "dynamic" side that will test his men in every department.

Nelson Mandela University from Port Elizabeth, who had a bye in round one, open their campaign with a home tie against Ikeys. Ikeys will be keen to make up for their loss last week, but they can expect a tough opponent in the Madibaz. "We're looking to play an expansive game again," said captain Riaan Esterhuizen, "and use it to our advantage, because traditionally our opponents are usually bigger than us."

In the other game in round two, UJ host the Central University of Technology, with both looking to register a first win. UJ lost badly to Maties a week ago while CUT went down 70-7 to Pukke, who have a bye this week. **Fixtures: Madibaz v Ikeys 4.45pm; Maties v Shimlas 6.30pm; UJ v CUT 6.30pm; Wits v Tuks 7pm**

