



Wits have sights set on another major scalp

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

Led by the impressive Constant Beckerling at flank, Wits stunned the UCT Ikey Tigers in Cape Town in round one, scoring two tries in the last 10 minutes to win 30-26 and get their 2018 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, the defending champions, were shocked in round one, at home, by Shimlas. The University of the Free State side won 19-17 a week ago.

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," he 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. But all we can do is focus on our own abilities and goals." It promises to be the match of round two, and kicks off at 7pm.

In another intriguing match, kicking off half an hour earlier, Maties host Shimlas in Stellenbosch.

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

The three-time champions and four-time 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," he 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 boss Hendro Scholtz described the Maties as a "dynamic" side that will test his men in every department. "Maties are the team to beat this year; they've got a physical pack and quick backs ... a well-balanced team that plays complete rugby."

Madibaz from Port Elizabeth, who had a bye in round one, open their campaign with a home tie against Ikeys, kicking off at 4.45pm.

In the other game today, UJ host the Central University of Technology (CUT), with both looking to register a first win.

