



# Maroon Machine can go all the way – coach

**MIKE DE BRUYN**

MATIES entertain UJ at the Danie Craven Stadium (4.45pm kick-off) tomorrow for the second time in seven days in the first Varsity Cup semi-final, while Tuks welcome Shimlas to the Tuks Stadium in the other semi (7pm kick-off) and both games will be shown live on SuperSport.

Maties played 560 minutes of winning rugby and pocketed seven wins on the trot during the round-robin phase which earned the Maroon Machine second place on the nine-team log table behind Tuks, the only side to beat them in a narrow 13-9 away defeat at the end of January.

The students from Stellenbosch have improved by the week, illustrated by last Monday's 65-19 massacre of UJ in the final round

of pool fixtures.

The University of Johannesburg team were simply outclassed the longer the contest went on and they have little chance of upstaging Maties in front of their own supporters. Their front eight did okay in the scrums but their backs were left simply watching as their opposite numbers ran amok.

Maties will want to repeat the feat and book a place in the final for the second year running and seventh time overall. They haven't lifted the trophy since completing a hat-trick of wins in 2010.

"Our record in the past six years of the competition hasn't delivered any silverware, a trend we want to halt," said Maties coach Hawies Fourie. "This is my second season in charge and I feel we have the squad to go all the

way. I'm not one to single out players; that's not my style. Obviously Tukkies will be thinking the same thing ... but we both still have to make it into the final. We'll treat UJ with respect but they must know that we mean business.

"And I want to thank our fans for their unmatched support for our home games. We haven't been beaten at home and aim to keep it that way."

UJ have not contested any of the previous nine finals but the fact that they are the only side to have beaten Tuks this season will not have gone unnoticed by their opponents.

Tuks denied Maties top spot on the table on superior points difference to ensure a home final if they make it past Shimlas. Shimmies of the Free State, winners for the first time in 2015, edged Cup

newcomers Wits for fourth place by two points to secure their place in the last four. Whether they can trouble a rampant Tuks outfit only time will tell. Their campaign hasn't been great although they did win five of eight games. Tuks crushed them 65-19 on their home field to illustrate the huge task that awaits them.

Tuks handed outgoing champions Pukke a 43-28 home defeat last time out in a show of force from the 2012/13 winners. Their coach, Pote Human, believes his charges will make the final for a third time: My boys are peaking at the right time and effort from both sets of players has been great; team work outstanding. Now we want to get it on with an opponent not to be underestimated. I think our forwards will lay the foundation for the back seven to shine."

