

Home final for Tuks

Pretoria side survive second-half onslaught to win Varsity Cup semi-final against UFS-Shimlas

CAPE TOWN — UP-Tuks survived a second-half resurgence by UFS-Shimlas to win their Varsity Cup semi-final 28-21 (half-time 23-9) at the Tuks Rugby Stadium on Monday.

Qualify for the Varsity Cup semi-finals and the supporters will come, which is exactly what happened in Pretoria as the students turned out in numbers to back their boyfies against the University of the Free State on a perfect autumn evening.

It was the visitors who upped the ante in the opening minutes as they attacked in waves causing UP-Tuks to scramble in defence. A cheeky quick tap by scrum-half Dian Badenhorst almost resulted in a try to UFS-Shimlas but the TMO adjudged the ball to have been lost forward. This spurred the home team to get their act together, which culminated in flyhalf Timus de Beer exploiting a gap to put wing Sibahle Maxwane into space to score the opening try in the 12th minute.

Both teams lalled into passages of attack on either side of the first strategy break with neither team able to crack the defensive line. Maxwane was the man to change the status quo in the 26th minute when he jinked his way past several defenders to score his second try of the night and UP-Tuks' first seven-point try.

A fantastic kick-and-chase by fullback Divan Rossouw several minutes later put the men from Pretoria in the right space to exploit UFS-Shimlas' defensive weak-



Tinus de Beer of UP-Tuks gets past Dian Badenhorst of Shimlas during the FNB Varsity Cup semi-final match between FNB Tuks and FNB Shimlas at Tuks Stadium on Monday. PHOTO: GALLO IMAGES

nesses, which saw scrumhalf and captain Andre Warner score the home team's third try of the evening.

An intercept by fullback Marco Mason on the visitor's five-metre line allowed the abrasive runner to gallop up

field and set the tone for flanker Phamzile Maqondwana to open the UFS-Shimlas account with minutes left in the

first half. Mason converted to cut the halftime deficit to 23-9.

The half-time chat must have been gruelling for the visitors as they came out of the change room a different team as they put UP-Tuks under the cosh. Several penalties against the Pretoria students allowed UFS-Shimlas to set up a lineout drive that saw replacement hooker Hanno Snyman cross the line.

UP-Tuks were forced to contain the visitors' onslaught with 14 men after flanker Marco van Staden was yellow carded in the 52nd minute for repeated team transgressions. This set the platform for UFS-Shimlas to score their third try through lock Neil Claassen. Mason could not level the scores as his conversion went wide.

Much like in the first half, both teams struggled to break through the defensive line on either side of the strategy break but this did not stop the two universities from running flat out at each other. The deadlock was finally broken when hooker Corniel Els broke off the back of a dominant UP-Tuks driving maul to score in the 72nd minute. De Beer could not extend the lead.

UFS-Shimlas continued to press hard on attack in the dying minutes of the match, with the visitors making regular inroads into the opposition's territory but in the end it was not to be as UP-Tuks held on to win 28-21 and thus secure a home final against Maties. — Sport24.

