

# Queens of student hockey

The Tuks women's team proved they were still the undisputed "Queens" of South African student hockey when they won the USSA title in Bloemfontein, beating Kovsies 1-0 in the final.

It means Tuks has been victorious in all three of the last tournaments they contested.

Last year, they achieved a unique double winning the USSA as well as the Varsity tournaments.

The team's ever-modest coach, Inky Zondi, ascribed his team success to hard work, guts and pure passion.

"We had something to prove as many pundits did not believe that we had what it takes to defend the title. That certainly served as extra motivation," he said after the victory.

According to the Tuks players, Zondi is too modest, claiming that he is the real architect of their success.

There is indeed truth in what they say because in his own words Zondi is the forever student of the game.

Zondi realised at the start of the season that he had to bring about change in the way his team go about things.

Seven of last year's all-conquering team was still playing, but there were eight newcomers. Megan Anderson was also new in the role as captain.

It meant the challenge Zondi faced was to adapt the team tactics to the individual skills of the newcomers.

"We do not want to keep on playing the same year in and year out. It is all good and well for me to see the game in a certain way, but I am not on the field playing. In other words, I need to keep on evolving as a coach," explained Zondi.

The coach was full of praise for the way Anderson and vice-captain Marizen Marais took responsibility for what happened on the Astro turf.

He was also impressed with the passion and commitment with which Claire Gibbings played.

Hockey could be a cruel game at times. The Tuks men's hockey team can vouch for it.

They finished third in this year's USSA tournament, but with a bit of luck things easily could have been different.



The Tuks women's hockey team after their victory in the final of the USSA hockey tournament last week. **Photo: Reg Caldecott.**