



# Varsity Hockey returns with a bang

THE hard-hitting boys of hockey will return to their playing fields when the Varsity Hockey edition for 2018 gets going.

The biannual Varsity Hockey tournament will commence on May 4 at Wits Hockey Astro, with the finals taking place on May 21.

Eight universities will compete for South Africa's greatest inter-varsity hockey prize. They are Wits (University of the Witwatersrand), UCT (University of Cape Town), Maties (University of Stellenbosch), Madibaz (Nelson Mandela University), NWU (University of the North West), Tuks (University of Pretoria), UJ (University of Johannesburg) and Kovsies (University of the Free State).

The UJ men's hockey team will look to reclaim the Varsity Hockey trophy in nemesis Wits' backyard when the tournament returns on May 4 for the first leg.

The second leg will take place at the Tuks Astro from May 11 to 14, with the final on May 21.

In 2016 the UJ men lifted the Varsity Hockey trophy after defeating Tuks 4-2 at the UJ Astro.



**VARSITY HOCKEY RETURNS:** The bragging rights for Varsity Hockey 2018 are up for grabs again. The biannual tournament starts on Friday. Some of the captains from the university teams are Estiaan Kriek (Tuks), Kyle Lion-Cachet (UJ), Duitser Bosman (Varsity Sports) and Michael Marki (Wits). *Photo: Annette van Schalkwyk*

Varsity Hockey is sponsored by Samsung, Mugg & Bean and FNB.

UJ duo Che February and Spencer Botes could be the key to UJ's title ambitions. Both forwards represented South Africa at u-18 level and are in the current South Africa u-21 squad, making them dangerous weapons in the

Johannesburg side's arsenal.

Traditional powerhouse Tuks have their own set of superstars. South Africa u-21 player Nduzozo Lembethe, who leads the Pretoria side from the midfield, and Northerns Senior A goalkeeper Estiaan Kriek will have an axe to grind, as both players were present

in Tuks' loss in the final to UJ in 2016.

Maties could prove to be dark horses, with the defensive prowess of Andrew Hobson keeping the opposition at bay, in conjunction with the experience of Alex Stewart, a former South Africa Junior World Cup player.

The men from Stellenbosch will be boosted by the lethal Keenan Horne. The ever-industrious striker recently returned from the Commonwealth Games where he captained the Proteas against Wales.

The Power Play remains a fan favourite in the Varsity Hockey tournament. A Power Play is taken by one side at any stage of the game. The side choosing to initiate the Power Play forces the opposition to remove two players from the field. Any goals scored during the Power Play count for two goals.

Varsity Hockey code manager Jana Arlow explained that the tournament is one of the greatest amphitheatres for the sport in South Africa.

"The sheer number of Varsity Hockey alumni who have gone on to represent South Africa is an indication of the strength of the tournament and how much value it brings to the sport as a whole.

"Just this year, eight of the 18 players in the South African Commonwealth squad played Varsity Hockey."

