

Marais back at Tuks to halt disastrous season

VATA NGOBENI

Former Bulls Super Rugby and Currie Cup coach Nollis Marais has answered an SOS call and will become head coach of the Tuks Varsity Cup side in an effort to save the reigning champions' ailing campaign.

Marais, who had been unceremoniously dismissed as Super Rugby and Currie Cup coach last year following two horrid seasons, had been demoted to Blue Bulls Under-19 coach and now will return to the university side in a last ditch plan to turn their fortunes around.

Tuks have failed to win a game this year, slumping to five consecutive defeats with the last coming on Monday – a 40-26 loss at the hands of Pukke

at home.

The ill-fated season of the defending champions had begun with a shock 19-17 defeat to Shimlas before another unexpected loss to competition surprise team Wits in Joburg.

"The University of Pretoria fully acknowledges that the UP Tuks team has not had a great season up to now and is under pressure without winning a single match in the 2018 FNB Varsity Cup, and that steps need to be taken to try and rectify the current

situation.

"As part of a turn-around strategy, Marais, who is currently and will remain the coach of the Young Guns, has been appointed as head coach of the Tuks Varsity Cup team, with David Manuel moving to assistant coach.

"The status-quo of the other coaching and management team remains the same," said a statement from the Blue Bulls Company.

Marais, who guided Tuks to two Varsity Cup titles, takes

over the reins of the team from David Manuel, who will now become his assistant, as was the case in the successful seasons of 2012 and 2013.

While being brought back to his old post, Marais will simultaneously continue in his coaching role with the Tuks Young Guns team, who are at the top of the log in the North section of their respective competition having won two matches against Wits and UJ.

Manuel had been appointed in place of Pote Human, who has been elevated to the role of forwards coach with the Bulls Super Rugby and Currie Cup teams and will be no stranger to assisting Marais after serving in that role in Varsity Cup, Bulls Super Rugby and Currie Cup sides including

being losing finalists to the Free State Cheetahs in the Currie Cup in 2016.

"Marais is one of the most successful junior coaches in the country, having lead the Blue Bulls U21 side to two consecutive titles, and UP Tuks to two Varsity Cup titles.

"His experience and expertise at this level will no doubt be a massive boost for the Tukkies team in the remaining games. Both coaches, Marais and Manuel, have a great working relationship with each other, and are looking forward to these changes and are excited about the way forward," added the statement.

Marais' first game in charge will be Monday's encounter against CUT in Bloemfontein with his first home game being a week later against UJ.

