



Maties 'Machine' looks set to romp to Varsity Cup title

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IT is early days, but it is already starting to look as though Maties could be lifting the Varsity Cup trophy for the first time since 2010.

The Maroon Machine has seen off three of the eight teams they will face and enjoy top spot on the standings with 14 points, four clear of Wits.

Last time out, on home soil at the Danie Craven Stadium, the Stellenbosch students edged defending champions Pretoria University 24-16 in what was a tense North/South derby played out in front of a packed house.

It was a first true test for Maties, one they passed but not before

being given a fright by a Tuks side chasing a first win from three outings.

The beaten delivered a performance several notches up from their previous two efforts and you can bet on them moving off the foot of the table in the coming weeks.

Maties are again setting the pace and all the signs point to them being champions in waiting.

They and Tuks share three titles apiece but the former have been on a dry run since completing a hat-trick of wins eight years ago.

One can expect an easy passage to the play-offs once the regular season of nine rounds is completed in the last week of March.

Maties entertain CUT of the

Free State tonight (6.30 pm kickoff) and will be out to net a five-point haul for the third time.

Should that play out, they would be on 19 points from a possible 20.

CUT edged NMMU Madibaz 38-37 for their first win of the campaign.

But, after being on the receiving end of two heavy defeats, chances of them causing an upset is highly unlikely.

Maties will hit the ground running and may well be targeting three digits.

Their pack has been outstanding when not given the run-around while the back seven always seem ready to cash in when put on the front foot.

Chippie Oelofse at loosehead prop is proving to be an inspirational captain, then the exploits of locks Johan Mosen and Ernst van Rhyn, the ball carrying duo always in the thick of the action and tackling like men possessed.

Flyhalf Christopher Smith looks a class act. He has time on his side and dictates play as he pleases. He looks one for higher honours in the not too distant future. Remu Malan at scrumhalf is also one to watch with his service spot-on and eye for the gaps.

But coach Hawies Fourie will tell you that there are no individual stars in the ranks, just young men who play for one another and love the game.

One should not rule out the chances of their arch-rivals UCT staking a claim for the silverware.

Currently in third place, the former two-time winners are starting to show their wares and are on a two-game winning streak, both wins won the hard way with guts and heart getting them over the line.

One thought that their opening-round loss to minnows Wits would see the Ikeys battling to avoid relegation in play for this edition.

They host 2015 champs Shimlas (fourth on log) at the Green Mile (6.30pm kickoff).

Other fixtures (home team first): NWU-Pukke v UJ; NMMU Madibas v Wits.

