

VODACOM CUP

Resurgent Blue Bulls claim trophy

By Craig Ray, *MWP Media*

THE VODACOM Cup grew in stature as a competitive and entertaining competition in 2001 as the Blue Bulls brought the good times back to Pretoria, sweeping to the title with a resounding 42-24 victory over the Boland Cavaliers in the final. The title was just reward for an excellent campaign run by the promising former Springbok assistant coach Heyneke Meyer who started the year with a blank page, awarding first caps to 26 of the 36 players they used in the competition. The approach paid huge dividends.

CURIOUS

Once again the tournament consisted of two pools of eight and seven teams but the competition was extended to a second 'Top 8' stage for the title proper and a secondary competition for the remainder for the newly created Vodacom Shield (the Welwitschias from Namibia, who were thrashed every week in the pool phase, opted to withdraw from the Shield citing lack of funds as the reason). The Blue Bulls topped section Y, winning five of their six matches and carrying forward 15 points to the Top 8s. The design of the points system meant that the Eagles took through nine points and started the second phase in a better position than Griquas, despite finishing below them on the table. In section Y the situation was even more curious. The Natal Wildebeest topped the standings with six wins from seven outings, but four of the sides they beat did not progress to the Super Eights. They carried through only nine points while the Vodacom Cheetahs, who finished fourth, took through 11 points having only won four matches.

DRAMATIC

The Blue Bulls continued their dominance in the second stage, finishing 11 points clear of second-placed Boland who surged up the table to secure a home semi-final against Griquas while the Cheetahs made the trip to Pretoria where the home side had to rally from 24-10 down to secure a breathless 39-38 victory. The second semi was similarly dramatic with Boland scoring 31 unanswered second half points to claim a 47-31 win over Griquas. The final was an intriguing prospect following the Top 8 meeting in which the lead had changed hands eight times before the Bulls triumphed 48-45. However Boland failed to live up to their potential, losing 42-24. In the Shield, the Griffons were the surprise package. They earned a home final against the Mighty Elephants thanks to the boot of veteran flyhalf Eric Herbert. The 36-year-old, competing in his 15th season of first class rugby, ended as top scorer in the Vodacom series with 193 points. Of those, 20 came in the Shield final as the Griffons won their first trophy in 13 years with a 40-27 victory.

Vodacom Cup

First semi-final *at Loftus Versfeld, Pretoria, May 12*

BLUE BULLS 39 (Tries: Rossouw 2, Venter, Van der Westhuyzen, Wasserman. Cons: Van der Westhuyzen 4, Pens: Van der Westhuyzen 2) beat VODACOM CHEETAHS 38 (Tries: Van den Heever 2, Stander, Grobbelaar. Cons: Barnard 3. Pens: Barnard 4).

Second semi-final *at Boland Stadium, Wellington, May 12*

BOLAND CAVALIERS 47 (Tries: Coetzee 2, April, Potgieter, Senekal, Human, De Kock. Cons: April 5) beat NASHUA GRIQUAS 31 (Tries: Lubbe, Tyibilika, Roux, Du Plessis. Cons: Lubbe 4. Pen: Lubbe).

FINAL *at Loftus Versfeld, Pretoria, May 18*

BLUE BULLS 42 (Tries: Van der Westhuyzen 2, T.Joubert, Bands, Fredericks, Van Schalkwyk, Cons: Van der Westhuyzen 3. Pens: Van der Westhuyzen 2) beat BOLAND CAVALIERS 24 (Tries: Strauss, Willemsse, Van Jaarsveld. Cons: April 3. Pen: April).

Vodacom Shield

First semi-final *at Telkom Park, Port Elizabeth, May 11*

MIGHTY ELEPHANTS 47 (Tries: Juries 2, Kok, Van Heerden, Peach, Gerber. Cons: Peach 4. Pens: Peach 3) beat SPOORNET BULLDOGS 13 (Tries: Jacobs, Loots. Pen: Hormann)

Second semi-final *at North West Stadium, Welkom, May 12*

GRIFFONS 39 (Tries: De Swardt, Fredericks, Botes. Cons: Herbert 3. Pens: Herbert 5. DG: Herbert) beat LEOPARDS 18 (Tries: Johnson, Muller, Van der Berg. Pen: Petersen)

FINAL *at North West Stadium, Welkom, May 19*

GRIFFONS 40 (Tries: Marot 2, Blom, Van der Westhuizen. Cons: Herbert 4. Pens: Herbert 4) beat MIGHTY ELEPHANTS 27 (Tries: Van Heerden 2, Dlomo, Juries. Cons: Mdyesha, Peach. Pen: Mdyesha).

LEADING POINTS SCORERS (100+)	<i>Apps</i>	<i>Tries</i>	<i>Cons</i>	<i>Pens</i>	<i>DGs</i>	<i>Pts</i>
Eric HerbertGriffons	12	-	26	44	3	193
Chelton April.....Boland	12	7	37	6	-	127
Solly Goosen.....Bulldogs	10	1	11	29	-	114
Quintin van TonderGriquas	11	4	14	18	1	105
Jaco van der WesthuyzenBlue Bulls	9	7	22	7	-	100

LEADING TRY SCORERS (8+)	<i>Apps</i>	<i>Tries</i>	<i>Cons</i>	<i>Pens</i>	<i>DGs</i>	<i>Pts</i>
Jannie van der Walt.....Lions	8	10	-	-	-	50
Darryl CoeriesEagles	10	8	-	-	-	40
Gielie de SwardtGriffons	12	8	-	-	-	40



Bullish Mood: The Blue Bulls celebrate the winning of the Vodacom Cup (from left): Danie Rossouw, Johan Wasserman, Giscard Pieters, Keegan Fredericks (crouching), Danie van Schalkwyk, Jaco van der Westhuyzen and coach Heyneke Meyer (far right). Pic: Tertius Pickard/Touchline

Vodacom Cup Standings

SECTION Y	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	Diff	TF	TA	B4	B7	Pts	CF
Blue Bulls	6	5	0	1	242	140	102	38	13	6	1	27	15
Nashua Griquas	6	3	1	2	205	185	20	20	20	3	2	19	8
Vodacom Eagles	6	4	0	2	170	161	9	18	16	2	0	18	9
Fedure Western Province	6	3	0	3	195	194	1	25	25	4	0	16	1
Leopards	6	2	0	4	150	167	-17	14	17	1	2	11	9
Spoornet Bulldogs	6	2	1	3	120	185	-65	10	21	0	1	11	5
Mpumalanga Pumas	6	1	0	5	153	203	-50	16	29	2	2	8	1

SECTION X	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	Diff	TF	TA	B4	B7	Pts	CF
Natal Wildebeest	7	6	0	1	216	160	56	26	19	3	0	27	9
Boland Cavaliers	7	5	0	2	313	165	148	46	21	6	0	26	6
Lions	7	5	0	2	270	185	85	34	17	4	0	24	6
Vodacom Cheetahs	7	4	0	3	242	172	70	30	20	4	1	21	11
Telkom Mighty Elephants	7	4	0	3	255	190	65	32	23	2	1	19	8
Griffons	7	3	0	4	169	152	17	17	17	3	2	17	6
Falcons	7	1	0	6	219	232	-13	27	28	2	3	9	1
Welwitschias	7	0	0	7	95	523	-428	13	80	0	0	0	-

VODACOM CUP	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	Diff	TF	TA	B4	B7	CF	Pts
Blue Bulls	4	4	0	0	150	117	33	41	16	3	0	15	34
Boland Cavaliers	4	3	0	1	194	109	85	41	12	4	1	6	23
Nashua Griquas	4	3	0	1	131	100	31	27	12	1	0	8	21
Vodacom Cheetahs	4	1	0	3	135	112	23	27	14	2	3	11	20
Natal Wildebeest	4	0	1	3	91	111	-20	18	15	1	2	9	14
Fedure Western Province	4	2	1	1	123	129	-6	17	15	3	0	1	14
Vodacom Eagles	4	1	0	3	79	169	-90	16	24	0	1	9	14
Lions	4	1	0	3	95	151	-56	22	20	2	1	5	12

VODACOM SHIELD	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	Diff	TF	TA	B4	B7	CF	Pts
Griffons	3	2	1	0	105	89	15	15	12	0	0	6	16
Telkom Mighty Elephants	3	2	0	1	80	86	-6	12	10	0	0	8	16
Spoornet Bulldogs	3	2	0	1	110	91	20	15	10	1	1	5	15
Leopards	3	0	1	2	63	85	-22	16	8	1	1	9	13
Falcons	3	1	0	2	97	105	-8	14	11	2	1	1	8
Mpumalanga Pumas	3	1	0	2	107	106	1	15	9	1	1	1	7

B4: Bonus points for scoring four or more tries. B7: Bonus points for losing by seven or fewer points. CF: Points carried forward.