

Vodacom Cup

LIONS EASE TO BACK-TO-BACK TITLES WITH REPEAT WIN



THE LIONS claimed the Vodacom Cup title for the third time in the competition's six-year history and became the first province to win back-to-back finals with a 26-17 victory over the Mobil Blue Bulls. It was a repeat of the 2002 final although this time the Bulls dominated in a way that the Lions had in the previous year's 54-38 victory; however they were unable to convert that edge in superiority despite the support of a 13 500-strong home crowd. Instead two tries to one from the Lions and a faultless kicking display from flyhalf Louis van Rensburg (who landed six out of six attempts to score 16 of his side's points) ensured an anti-climactic end to what had otherwise been an impressive season for the log-topping Bulls. They lost only once (27-23 to the Falcons) during a regular season which had been shortened to six matches as the competition went to a two-division format to mirror that of the ABSA Currie Cup. They beat the Lions 35-28 in the round robin stage and put away the Impala Leopards 47-19 in the semi-final, scoring 39 tries to the 28 of the winners. But it was the Lions who finished the tournament the most impressively. Although they lost to the Vodacom Cheetahs (38-26) as well as the Bulls in the log stage, they reversed that result in the semi-finals with a 20-16 victory in Bloemfontein to deserve the title for winning it with victories away from home in the finals.

Gideon Roux, the Bulls' teenaged flyhalf was the leading scorer in the Cup competition with 109 points but Tiaan Snyman and Louis van Rensburg (who shared the Lions' No 10 duties) managed 155 points between them as the Lions kicked 34 penalties to the Bulls' 19. The Bulls' JP Nel and Showan Smith (Cheetahs) were the leading try-scorers with six tries while the Bulls' Anton Leonard and John Mametsa scored five along with Michael Claassens of the Cheetahs and the Leopards' Henno Mentz who earned himself a move to the Natal Sharks for the ABSA Currie Cup season on the strength of his performances. At the foot of the table there was little contest for the unwanted title of the first team to be relegated from the Vodacom Cup: Boland earned that footnote by losing all six of their matches. They will be replaced in 2004 by the Spoornet Bulldogs who won all six of their log matches to finish top of the standings (and thereby earn promotion) before ending the season in style with a 32-0 win over Nashua Griquas having squeezed past the Mighty Elephants 28-21 in the semi-final. The Bulldogs' success brought near capacity crowds to Vodacom Park although the team's success ultimately cost them the loss of their coach, Kobus van der Merwe, who was lured away to Griquas and the promise of Premier Division Currie Cup Rugby after the Kimberley side earned a place while the Bulldogs missed out. The Bulldogs' victory in the Shield final was their first title since sharing the Currie Cup with Western Province in 1934 and the length of the wait just about compensated for the modesty of the bauble.

DOMESTIC CHAMPIONSHIPS

Vodacom Logs and Play-Offs

CUP	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	Diff	TF	TA	B4 ¹	B7 ²	Bonus Pts
Mobil Blue Bulls	6	5	0	1	236	133	103	31	12	5	1	6
Vodacom Cheetahs	6	5	0	1	256	147	109	35	17	4	0	4
Lions	6	4	0	2	246	151	95	24	19	3	1	4
Impala Leopards	6	3	0	3	167	214	-47	18	27	1	1	2
Natal	6	2	0	4	149	217	-68	19	31	2	2	4
Falcons	6	2	0	4	159	240	-81	20	28	2	1	3
Boland Cavaliers	6	0	0	6	123	234	-111	19	32	3	1	4

SEMI-FINALS

Blue Bulls 47, Impala Leopards 19 (halftime 26-12) Securicor Loftus, Pretoria, May 10. Referee: D Van Blommestein

Bulls - Tries: Tries: Nel (2), Joubert (2), Leonard, Vermaak, Olivier. Cons: Roux (5), Steyn.

Leopards - Try: Manuel. Con: J. Viljoen. Pens: J. Viljoen (4)

Vodacom Cheetahs 16, Lions 20 (halftime 0-14) Vodacom Park, Bloemfontein, May 9. Referee: S Veldsman

Cheetahs - Try: Claassens. Con: Barnard. Pens: Barnard (2), Kokoali.

Lions - Tries: Daniels (2). Cons: Van Rensburg (2). Pens: Van Rensburg (2).

FINAL

Blue Bulls 17, Lions 26 (halftime 11-10) Securicor Loftus, Pretoria, May 17. Referee: AD Turner

Bulls - Try: Rossouw. Pens: Roux (4)

Lions - Tries: Esterhuizen, Plaatjies. Cons: Van Rensburg (2). Pens: Van Rensburg (4).

SHIELD	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	Diff	TF	TA	B4 ¹	B7 ²	Bonus Pts
Spoornet Bulldogs	6	6	0	0	225	117	108	25	14	4	0	4
Nashua Griquas	6	4	0	2	194	148	46	27	17	5	2	7
Investec WP	6	4	0	2	185	181	4	21	25	3	1	4
Mighty Elephants	6	3	0	3	165	159	6	21	16	4	1	5
@lantic Pumas	6	2	0	4	170	190	-20	22	23	4	2	6
Vodacom Eagles	6	2	0	4	147	185	-38	20	24	1	0	1
Griffons	6	0	0	6	142	248	-106	15	32	1	1	2

SEMI-FINALS

Spoornet Bulldogs 28, Mighty Elephants 21 (halftime 15-14) Vodacom Park, East London, May 9. Referee: JC Fortuin

Bulldogs - Tries: Ndungane (2), Booi, Mbulali. Con: Bester. Pens: Bester, Mangweni.

Mighty Elephants - Tries: Mdyesha, Duncan, Penalty try. Cons: Peach (2), Hennessey.

Nashua Griquas 31, Investec WP 10 (halftime 12-7) Vodacom Park, Kimberley, May 10. Referee: JC Meuwesen

Griquas - Tries: Grobbelaar (2), Heunis, Swart, Cockrell. Cons: Petersen (3)

Investec WP - Try: Basson. Con: Rossouw. Pen: Rossouw

FINAL

Spoornet Bulldogs 32, Nashua Griquas 0 (halftime 22-0) Vodacom Park, East London, May 17. Referee: J Panday

Bulldogs - Tries: Cumming, Mofu. Cons: Bester (2). Pens: Bester (6).

¹ Bonus points for scoring four tries. ² Bonus points for losing by seven points or fewer

Vodacom Leading Scorers

Cup

MOST POINTS

109	G (Gideon) Roux	Mobil Blue Bulls
99	C (Tiaan) Snyman	Lions
99	J (Jannie) Viljoen	Impala Leopards
97	C (Conrad) Barnard	Vodacom Cheetahs
58	MJ (MJ) Smith	Falcons
55	L (Louis) van Rensburg	Lions

MOST TRIES

6	JP (JP) Nel	Mobil Blue Bulls
6	S (Showan) Smith	Vodacom Cheetahs
5	M (Michael) Claassens	Vodacom Cheetahs
5	A (Anton) Leonard	Mobil Blue Bulls
5	SJ (John) Mametsa	Mobil Blue Bulls
5	H (Henno) Mentz	Impala Leopards

MOST CONVERSIONS

23	G (Gideon) Roux	Mobil Blue Bulls
21	C (Conrad) Barnard	Vodacom Cheetahs
17	C (Tiaan) Snyman	Lions
13	MJ (MJ) Smith	Falcons
12	J (Jannie) Viljoen	Impala Leopards

MOST PENALTIES

19	C (Tiaan) Snyman	Lions
19	J (Jannie) Viljoen	Impala Leopards
16	G (Gideon) Roux	Mobil Blue Bulls
15	C (Conrad) Barnard	Vodacom Cheetahs
14	L (Louis) van Rensburg	Lions

MOST DROP GOALS

1	R (Ruan) Coetzee	Falcons
1	M (Tewis) de Bruyn	Impala Leopards
1	C (Tiaan) Snyman	Lions
1	L (Louis) van Rensburg	Lions
1	J (Jannie) Viljoen	Impala Leopards

Shield

MOST POINTS

97	W (Werner) Bester	Bulldogs
85	S (Solly) Goosen	WP
65	J (Jacques) Schutte	Pumas
62	L (Louis) Strydom	Griffons
61	J (Justin) Peach	EP
54	PB (Patrick) Petersen	Griquas

MOST TRIES

9	OM (Odwa) Ndungane	Spoornet Bulldogs
8	CN (Chumani) Booie	Spoornet Bulldogs
5	S (Stefan) Basson	Investec WP
5	R (Robin) Cockrell	Nashua Griquas
5	S (Solly) Goosen	Investec WP
5	J (Jeffrey) Stevens	Nashua Griquas

MOST CONVERSIONS

18	PB (Patrick) Petersen	Nashua Griquas
15	J (Jacques) Schutte	@lantic Pumas
14	W (Werner) Bester	Spoornet Bulldogs
12	S (Solly) Goosen	Investec WP
10	J (Justin) Peach	EP

MOST PENALTIES

23	W (Werner) Bester	Spoornet Bulldogs
15	L (Louis) Strydom	Griffons
12	S (Solly) Goosen	Investec WP
12	J (Justin) Peach	Mighty Elephants
10	J (Jacques) Schutte	Pumas

MOST DROP GOALS

2	QJ (Quintin) van Tonder	Nashua Griquas
1	S (Stefan) Basson	Investec WP
1	E (Erik) Haggard	Investec WP