

Varsity on Course for Prescott

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By Jeff Harbert (RVA Senior)

With the 2008 rugby season nearing its climax, Coach Mark Kinzer and his team will be more than confident of capturing a first Prescott Cup in 14 years. The Varsity squad, full of mostly juniors and seniors, with one sophomore, has only one regular season game left to play before they test themselves in the Semi-Finals of the Prescott cup. And after finishing as runners up at the annual Blackrock tournament, the Buffalos will be desperate to end the year on a high.

After losing in the final of Blackrock to Strathmore, Varsity gained a small measure of revenge by beating them on their own turf to kick off what has been a fantastic season. The narrow 5-0 win over Strathmore was followed by a 36-5 thrashing of Kiambu. Confidence was already building inside the RVA camp, and after a 19-5 win over Alliance, few could doubt this team's potential. Another win, this time over Lenana School, provided further proof of Varsity's championship credentials. The score line read 24-12, and just as importantly, RVA's record in the league extended to 4-0.

Unbeaten and at the top of the league, people could be excused for harboring hopes of a triumph in Prescott this year. However, since winning their first four games in the league, Varsity has slipped to defeat in its last two games, both of which were played away from home.

A narrow 10-8 loss at Nairobi School cost Varsity its unbeaten record, but even a 12-7 defeat by Mangu the following week did little to dent RVA's standing at the top of the league.

So with a place in the Semi-Finals already secure, Varsity is just one win away from being the first team from RVA to reach the Prescott Final since 1995. Victory in the final would be RVA's first since 1994.

After such a long wait, and then coming agonizingly close to winning Blackrock for the third consecutive season, it comes as no surprise that the players are desperate to win Prescott.



"The season's been good," Varsity's Joshua Mlay said. "Hopefully we'll win Prescott."

Varsity's starting winger, Jin Na, also declared his desire to win Prescott. "The beginning of the season was a little rough; we only had about five returners. But most of the line had played together last year on JV, so it helped. But more than anything I just want to win Prescott."

Three-time letterman and co-captain Odeke Ekirapa is confident of his side's chances of winning Prescott.

"I feel the season has been up and down. It started out really good; we did well and won some good games handsomely. But then we got injuries, lost a lot of people, so we lost our last two games, which was a bummer."



And just like the rest of his team, Odeke is hoping his team can end RVA's long drought of failing to win Prescott.

"I hope we finish well, do well in the Semi's and hopefully bring the Prescott Cup home."

Coach Mark Kinzer also acknowledged the numerous injuries that have affected his team.

"I'm frustrated by injuries, very frustrated," he said. "The boys are playing well. We're like an eight cylinder engine that's only firing on six and seven cylinders."

So with just the Semi-Finals and, quite possibly, the Finals of the Prescott Cup standing in the way of an extraordinary achievement for RVA's Varsity rugby team, it's no wonder players and fans alike are excited for the culmination of what has already been a thrilling season.

Editor's Note: RVA won the Prescott Semis 15-5 over Strathmore on Monday, 30 June. The team will now contest the Final at 4:30 p.m. on Friday, 4 July, at the RFUEA grounds in Nairobi.