

Balls to the Wall: EP Squash Kings

It's 6-o'clock on a Wednesday and the regular league bunch shuffle in. There's a young lad sitting next to me, looking like he's ready to run. And the matches start with competitive zeal – always some drama, some good calls, some bad, some great rallies, some bad, always some chirping, some close encounters, sometimes some mis-matches. And then it's over, cards are scrawled, signed and posted. Showered, and warmed, the combatants gather for the real business of League. Consoling and commiserating, congratulations and consumption. Getting to know one another, analysis, review and discussion, some politics, some skinner and maybe some scandal. More recently, invariably, the HIGHS and lows of The Kings' season has come under surveillance, where Yours Truly, for 10 seconds, gained season's TV fame with a very glum face that became The Face of the Region at the Waratahs wobble.

Last week, the question was raised, "If The Kings team had to walk into the pub, incognito, as individuals, in casual clothes, how many would we recognise ? Luke, bearded or not, - yes, Demetri, yes. George – yes. Who could miss that moustache ? Sergeal – maybe, Bandise and Wimpie – probably ? And these are guys who are receiving hours of weekly TV coverage. Now I am not a Bruce Willis, Die Hard rugby fan but I take my weekly communion and I pay my tithes to support these guys who train daily, and have taken some incredible physical abuse this season, all in the name of fame and glory, and, dare I say, a couple of pennies. But do they receive the individual recognition they deserve ?

You may well ask , "Where is this oke going with this ? What does a squash moffie know about Rugby, and why is he discussing The Kings in a Squash article ? "

Well, stuck in little boxes all over the town, there is another group of Kings and Queens, who, while all holding down day jobs, or studying, also spend hours, daily, in training, working at their fitness, developing skills, and competing. In July, they too, will be representing EP at the Investec Jarvis Cup inter-provincial in Port Elizabeth, taking on the best South Africa can chuck at them. Sadly , they will earn nothing. In fact, they will probably have to dig into their own pockets for the honour of representing their province. Even more sadly, they will also earn little in terms of recognition as probably only their squash peers will recognise them as the highly efficient sporting machines, that they are.

So this month, let's take a look at some of our EP Squash Kings . And if you see them walking down the street. Don't walk on by. Doff your cap. They deserve it. And pop into Londt Park, Westview, Crusaders and Old Grey during the week of 8-12 July and let's beat the drums for them, as well. The sides will be announced after the Crusaders Tournament on 2 June, but the following should make up the nucleus of the 3 sides.

Rudi van Niekerk: leader of the Van Niekerk dynasty, ex-Framesby pupil and SA Schools player, Rudi has shown that he can live with the best but without regular exposure to top level squash, it is difficult to maintain the consistency required. An exciting stroke player with typical Van Niekerk grit, Rudi represented South Africa against the Dutch touring team as the up-and-coming junior in 2006. Who knows what he might have achieved, had he explored the professional circuit ?

Zane Schwarz – Old Queenian and father-to-be, enigmatic Zane is cool, calm and clinical, with a no frills approach to the game. But play him, and you realise that you have no time. An outstanding coach and student of the game

Mark Rogers : Old Grey, Rogers represented the SA at the World Junior champs in Egypt in 2006 and is now based in Germany, where he plays and coaches. It is hoped that sufficient funds can be raised to bring him back as he will be a major boost for the team

Kyle Schwarz: younger brother of Zane, NMMU student, Kyle is an absolute fitness fanatic who works exceptionally hard at his game. Incredibly quick, Kyle will chase down anything thrown at him. Just needs to assert himself a little more.

Sean Bailey: ex- Grey pupil, Sean's never say-die attitude is equivalent to the Kings' draw against the Brumbies. Fit, fast and furious, he is always a spectacle to watch with his Sergeal-type speed and diving retrieving. Captained the side to a magnificent win last year to gain promotion.

Paul Mason: "The Wall" had a fairytale rise "to fame" where he started hacking in the 12th league and gradually worked his way through to 1st league and has represented EP and WP at provincial level. An Ironman to boot, just know, that to beat Mason, you have to win. You will get no free points

Bonakele Nomkala, Thami Mngcete and Lonwabo Sigele : probably EP's proudest proteges, these three are products of Angela Difford's Development programme, and this is no BEE exercise. Under very difficult circumstances, financially and logistically, they have climbed the ranks, and somehow, they save their best for the inter-provincials. Just need that mental strength and self-belief, to take them, right to the top

Brinley Forbes : A son of Uitenhage, Brinley is probably the most talented player in the province. If he commits himself, he is destined to play at the highest levels but is still a bit flashy and impatient. Last year, he went through his first inter-provincial, unbeaten.

Shaun Viljoen : a product of DF Malherbe, Shaun has probably never really achieved his true potential, and has recently been blighted with back injuries. A veteran of 13 Jarvis Cups, Shaun will add maturity and experience to the young crop coming through.

Steff Eugen: St Andrews product and Rhodes No.1, Steff spent most of last year travelling overseas where his game improved in leaps and bounds. A great volleyer - he has made many sit up, sweat and worry.

Dane Bigaro : another from the Grey Squash stable, Dane's architectural commitments and injuries have side-lined a very promising career but he is still a very tough competitor and great team-man

Back from a fight with glandular fever, NMMU's **Jarryd Terblanche** , also a former Grey and SA schools player, is just starting to make his presence felt again. This tall left-hander has a very complete game and a strong mind. Once back to full fitness, expect big things from him.

Next month, we will introduce you to The Queens of our courts.

" Hello.... Sorry, what did you say your name was ?"

“David”

“Oh..... David Bullbring ? Aren't you a friend of my son ?”