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Rugby

Trio struggle to emerge from Heathens' shadow



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Kampala

Playing today (4:30pm)

Heathens v Buffaloes (KYRFC)

Rhinos v Kobs (KRFC)

Nile v Pirates (Jinja)

Impis v Mongers (Makerere)

Not much has changed in terms of playing staff for utl Kobs, G4S Pirates and Entebbe Mongers but the trio at least share a common foe – champions MTN Heathens.

Even though the latter two are yet to win the Nile Special Premier League that starts today at four different venues, they might hold the key to the destiny of the crown. Mongers beat Kobs last season to further narrow the gap with the 'big three' and ran close to Heathens and Pirates to no avail. Heathens host Toyota Buffaloes at Kyadondo RFC today and utl Kobs face Rhinos in the Kampala RFC derby while Pirates travel to Jinja to play Nile. Mongers visit Makerere University Impis at the graveyard.

Heathens are desperate to shed quick skin following a disappointing end to last year that is mainly remembered for the terrorist attacks at Kyadondo on July 11. "It's important that we move one step at a time. Buffaloes always want to prove a point against us so we must take extra precaution," Brian Tabaruka, the Heathens coach, said early this week. Ever-promising Pirates are keen on a first cut.

Since joining from Makerere University, Marlon Ondiegi, Rodney Turyatamba and Juma Hillary have blown hot and cold. This year presents a chance to the trio to try and change the tide for coach Brian Makalama's side.

Next step

Utility back Kigongo Ssebalamu is relishing the next step for Mongers. "The difference between us and them is experience which we are attaining to force tight games," Ssebalamu said. Their hopes will heavily rely on Adrian Wasswa, Andrew Olweny and Herbert Kato as the club is locked in a fight to retain Ambrose Kakuru, who wants to join Kobs.

Kobs, for whom winger Lawrence Wakabi starred enroute to winning the Uganda Cup, are hoping for an improved performance. "I missed so many games last season and my focus is on playing more this time round. Hopefully, I can finish as top try scorer," Wakabi said. Centre

James Kimono could be crucial to the team's hopes whereas the development of Ambrose

Kamanyiire in the middle is equally important.

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