

Written by Editor

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CAPE TOWN - WHILE he admitted that there was a “deflating” feeling in the team after nearly losing to the Cheetahs, Bulls coach Jake White said all that mattered was that his team secured a Currie Cup home semi-final and final in their 39-36 victory at Loftus Versfeld on Saturday night.

The Pretoria outfit almost went down in dramatic fashion in the final 10 minutes as the Free State side scored two quick tries through fullback Cohen Jasper and wing Malcolm Jaer, while Bulls debutant Ruan Combrinck was also yellow-carded.

But White’s team held on for victory, although they had virtually claimed top spot on the standings already at that stage with a four-try bonus point.

The defending champions ended on 49 log points, nine more than the second-placed Sharks, who lost 35-24 to Western Province in Durban on Saturday night. WP finished fourth on 35 points, with Griquas third - also on 35, but with a better points difference.

It all means that the Bulls will host Province in a Loftus semi-final, while the Sharks will face Griquas at Kings Park next Saturday.

“The bottom line is that I said we needed to get a home semi and a home final, and we needed to win. We’ve done that now, so we’ve got our own destiny in our own hands now,” White said.

“It almost feels like you - not that you’ve lost, but it’s a little bit deflated because you’ve sort of let them in on tries. But let us not forget that we played the last 10 minutes with 14 men, and then they exposed us on the outside without a back out wide, which is well done on them, and secondly, which is what rugby is all about.

“We had two yellow cards, which meant for 20 minutes, we played with 14 men. You are not going to be able to win finals and semi-finals if you do that, but I am very happy that after being 21-14 down, and the way we adapted and the halftime talk...

“And not just the talk, but the understanding of what needed to be done was obviously pleasing for me.”

The former Bok coach said it didn’t matter who the Bulls faced in the semi-finals, although the players may have some revenge on their minds after a depleted side lost the first-round match 48-24 to WP at Loftus Versfeld on the same day the ‘seniors’ went down in the Rainbow Cup final against Benetton in Italy on June 19.

“We’ve got to be good enough to beat anybody that comes to Loftus. If

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we start planning about we prefer this team and that team, then the competition doesn't, I suppose, have the credence that it deserves," White said.

"We go semi-final, final, week off, Leinster in Dublin (in the United Rugby Championship)! I don't think we need to worry too much about who we play at home here. There's a lot of bigger games coming up, and if we are not good enough to beat any of the other teams at home here, then we don't deserve to be champions."

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