



PICTURE: FUAD ESACK

■ Vineyard Swimming Club's Tai Pearson, 14, pictured here at last year's national junior swimming championships in Stellenbosch, was in top form at the national champions that ended in Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth), at the weekend. Equally impressive at last year's junior nationals where he collected nine gold medals, Tai, from Newlands and a Grade 9 pupil at Rondebosch Boys' set a number of SA and Western Cape records again this year, winning six gold medals and three silver medals in the nine events he swam to represent the Western Cape. This six-day gala was officially billed as the Commonwealth Trials but included all the top senior and junior swimmers in the country. Tai swam 18 times over the six days, nine prelims to qualify for nine finals. In every final he swam a personal best and, if he keeps following this trajectory, he should qualify for next year's world junior championship, says Vineyard coach Rhys Hugo.

Quest for Premier Cup glory begins

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A lack of a major sponsor, a crippling drought and to top it all off, a catastrophic global pandemic, are just some of the difficulties organisers of the annual under-19 Bayhill Premier Cup (BPC) have faced in recent years.

For now, however, it's all systems go as the qualifying squads and supporters gather at Erica Park, in Belhar, for the 31st edition of the Easter soccer spectacular, which kicked off yesterday, Wednesday April 13.

Established in 1989, the tournament has been around for more than three decades but didn't take place over the past two years due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdowns.

Tournament director PJ Williams is confident that this year's event will live up to its usual high standards, despite some of the challenges they faced.

"The 31st edition of BPC is upon us. After two years of absence, I do not know whether I should be excited or anxious.

"What I know though, is that this is the most exciting time for the players, clubs, and spectators. Somewhere among this year's participating teams there could be a rough diamond just waiting to be discovered," he said.

"There are a few new visiting teams participating for the first time. Imagine some of those



players coming to the Mother City for the first time," he said.

"Such are the opportunities that the BPC creates with our partners and sponsors.

"I wish the visitors safe travels to Cape Town. Also a sincere welcome to the BPC.

"Some restrictions are still in place. We therefore ask our loyal supporters and spectators to adhere to the rules.

"To the players, we know you have waited for this for a long time. Use this opportunity to your advantage and do your best.

"Thanks again to the match officials for offering up their time and to all our partners, thanks for your support towards making BPC happen again," he said.

Meanwhile, Premier Cup hosts Bayhill United will have their work cut out in Group B, alongside Amalaw's FC, Blue Downs Spurs and Wayside Wanderers.

Spurs and Wanderers were to get the proceedings under way at 3pm in this group's opening fixture. Yesterday's other opening match saw Jordan Callies taking on Hustlaz Academy in a Group C clash.

All eyes will be on Group A when champions Highlands Park take on FC Real in their opening



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■ D&G Orient's Ebrahim Richards, left, and Hanover Park's Leo Forbes goes after the loose ball during their sides' friendly warm-up match ahead of this weekend's under-19 Premier Cup competition. Slotted in Group A, D&G, who make their fourth appearance at the tournament, will face champions Highlands Park, FC Real SA and Fish Hoek's Ubuntu Academy in the group stages of the competition. Hanover Park has been slotted in Group H, along with Virginia Academy, City Strikers and Mitchell's Plain LFA representatives Bayview FC.

match, today, Thursday April 14, at 3pm.

Fish Hoek's Ubuntu Academy are slotted in the same group as the champions.

Already some pundits are predicting an all PSL or Gauteng affair for the final, as a number

of top-flight clubs from up north feature in this year's showpiece, as has been the case in previous years.

In 2019, the last time the tournament was held, Highlands Park beat Mamelodi Sundowns 4-2 on penalties after playing to

a 1-all draw.

However, as is the nature of the game, anyone can win and Cape sides have every reason to fancy their chances.