

# TMISS off to cracking start

**TUNKU** Mahkota Ismail Sports School (TMISS) coach Wan Ibrahim Wan Chik is confident his charges will make a quick return to the Malaysian Rugby Union (MRU) Super League after opening their National Inter-Club Championships (NICC) with a superb win on Saturday.

TMISS, relegated to the NICC for controversially pulling out of the Super League final against Cobra last year due to a clash of commitments, were in devastating form when they hammered Sikamat Gunners 61-3 in their opening league match.

Despite having lost 12 key players, many of whom are national players who have enrolled for tertiary education at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) this year, Wan Ibrahim said his current squad still have what it takes to finish in the top three and clinch promotion.

"I feel the NICC will be a much tougher competition this year as Negri Sembilan Wanderers (also relegated) and Serdang Angels (UPM) are also very strong teams and we cannot afford to take anyone for granted," said the former national coach.

"We have lost many players (to UPM) this year but we accept it as it is our role to keep

producing quality players for the country. However, we are in good form after having recently come back from a training stint in New Zealand and I am confident the squad we have are good enough to earn promotion again this year."

TMISS had earned promotion to the Super League for the first time last year after having beaten Royal Selangor Club 24-15 in the NICC final.

Wan Ibrahim, who is also the headmaster of TMISS, added that he viewed being relegated to the NICC in a positive light and held no grudges.

"With the MRU now allowing up to seven foreign players on the field at a time, I feel it is good that we have a chance to start the season early with the NICC," he said.

"Should we qualify for the Super League next month, we will have already had a number of matches under our belt.

"This will be very important for us as I expect the big clubs to be heavily utilising imports this year, which is something (imports) we do not have."

TMISS will next play Malay Village Peoples Rugby Club (MVPRC) at home on Sunday. **By Fadhli Ishak**