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## IT WILL BE THE FIJIAN WAY

### BEN RYAN



A jubilant Naitasiri team members with supporters lift the Farebrother Sullivan Trophy after defeating Suva 25-23 at the ANZ Stadium yesterday. ■ More on Page 26. Picture: JONE LUVENITOGA

# New kings

By RASHNEEL KUMAR

A GUTSY performance by Naitasiri ended Suva's Farebrother-Sullivan Trophy reign at the ANZ Stadium in Laucala yesterday.

The spirited Highlanders shocked the Capital City side 25-23 in a thrilling encounter in front of about 4000 fans, most of which belonged to Naitasiri.

The Fiji Bitter Suva side left it too late for comeback as Naitasiri led 22-10 at the break.

Naitasiri showed they meant business from the opening whistle as skipper Waisea Luveniyali gave the side an early lead through a successful penalty kick in the second minute of play.

Suva replied with a try from Sunia Kubu in the 15th minute following a blistering run from the winger who sliced through the Naitasiri defence to score the opening try.

Emosi Mulevoro added the extras to give Suva the 7-3 lead for the first and the last time in the match.

Naitasiri continued pressuring the Suva defence and produced a powerful forward play to score its opening try through hooker Saula Qalomai in the 24th minute to regain the lead 8-7.

The Eroni Vereivalu-coached side took advantage of the wet surface following the early drizzle to force errors from the intimidating looking Suva side.

Outside centre Esala Delai pounced on the ball knocked off by Suva full-back Isoa Donaldson and raced for the try line for a 15-7 lead midway the opening half.

Warhorse Senivalati Vunibola increased Naitasiri's lead to 22-7 in the final quarter of the first half before Donaldson cushioned the deficit to 10-22 through a successful penalty kick.

The Salimoni Ravouvou-coached Suva looked the better of the two sides in the early stages of the second spell and midway in the half, the side was just two points behind Naitasiri.

Donaldson kicked a penalty followed by the try from skipper Dale Tonawai and another successful penalty from Mulevoro had Suva trailing 20-22.

Naitasiri and Suva exchanged penalties to make it 25-23 when tensions started to flare in the match.

Suva's John Stewart was the first to cop the yellow card followed by Donaldson and Naitasiri winger Nasoni Roko's sin-bin.

Naitasiri missed four successive penalty kicks while Suva had the last best chance to clinch the match when the side was awarded the penalty in the final stages of the match but the players opted to go for the try line instead.

Naitasiri held on to win the match

25-23 to wrestle the prestigious trophy from Suva.

"Our game plan was to pile up points in the last quarter of the match in the first half, as through assessment of Suva's past three games, we found their fitness was not there in the last lap," Vereivalu said.

"In the second half, it was a different story. The strategies we put in place for the second half didn't work.

"Winning the Farebrother Trophy brings the *vanua* together and we are thankful that the boys did just that."

Suva coach Ravouvou was gracious in defeat.

"Our game plan was to disrupt Naitasiri's play but we let them score in the first half which was our downfall.

"They were a better side because they won."

Naitasiri will defend the Farebrother Trophy against Nadi next week.