

Reigning NCAA champion La Salle-Greenhills, Mapua and National University loom as the title favorites in the 6th Philippine Secondary Schools Basketball Championship (PSSBC) Dickies Underwear Cup that fires off on Dec. 16 at the SGS Stadium in Quezon City.

The Greenies, who beat the Red Robins last month to clinch their breakthrough crown since making their return in the country's oldest collegiate league in 1998, are expected to parade a potent core led by spitfire guard Joel Cagulangan and fellow Mythical Team member Inand Fornillos.

However, La Salle-Greenhills assistant Vince Fran refused to be swayed, saying: "We're expecting a wide-open race since most of the teams in the hunt are very competitive. I think all teams have equal chance at the coveted crown."

"It's our commitment to develop men's basketball through this elite juniors championship. We hope to develop and discover future superstars through this short yet exciting tournament," said Blackwater owner Dioceldo Sy, member of the league's Board of Governors.

Also included in the Board are Dr. Cecilio Pedro of Hapee Toothpaste, Freego Jeans' Eduard Tio, Terry Que of Poly Gloss, Che Lu Bar & Grill's Jimmy Dela Cruz, Jimi Lim of Ironcon Builders, MEC Computers' Leoncio Chua and current chairman Rudy Yu of Dickies Underwear.

Mapua, bannered by its 'Big 3' of reigning NCAA MVP Will Gozum, Clint Escamis and Warren Bonifacio, is also tipped as a legit force to be reckoned with along with the NU Bullpups, now handled by veteran coach Goldwyn Monteverde.

Inaugural champion Hope Christian High School along with former titlists San Beda and Chiang Kai Shek High School are also expected to make some noise in the six-day, 12-team tourney supported by Davies Paints, Choi Garden and Molten.

Also in the hunt are defending UAAP titleholder Far Eastern University-Diliman, University of Santo Tomas, University of the Philippines, Letran, Manila Patriotic School and reigning CESAFI titlist University of Visayas.

The 12 teams will be divided into four groups, with the protagonists playing in a single round robin. The Top 2 teams from each side will advance to the knockout quarterfinals and the survivors will play in a pair of do-or-die games.

The finals will be a winner-take-all showdown, with the eventual champion taking home P50,000 cash plus a trophy and the bridesmaid finisher earning P30,000 and a trophy. The third-placer will bag P20,000 and a trophy as well.

Follow the writer on Twitter: @spinph

Read more at

<http://www.spin.ph/basketball/news/6th-pssbc-dickies-underwear-cup-opening-on-dec-16#REZwm6SGdspDm2q7.99>