



photographer **Mervyn Mercado**

JULIE V JULIE

Top of the table clash . . . will be huge

By Veronica Miller

The NSW Swifts v Melbourne Vixens – one of the most anticipated matches of the season. It's enough to get any netball fan a-twitter with excitement.

Julie Fitzgerald of the NSW Swifts and Julie Hoornweg of the Melbourne Vixens are both premiership-winning coaches with years of experience behind them, and you can be certain that they've brought their wisdom to the players for this competition, and this match.

A great coach does more than hone a player's skills on the court, she inspires them to run, jump and throw harder and better than they ever believed they could. *Scoop* sought out Julie Fitzgerald before this match to find out what it is that makes her great.

Experience, Julie says, is first and foremost what she brings to the NSW Swifts. She's won four premierships with the Sydney Swifts – in 2001, 2004, 2006 and 2007 – a feat few coaches can boast.

"But," she is quick to add, "the secret of my success lies with the great players with whom I've had the pleasure of working. The calibre

of athletes over the years has been outstanding."

Timing is all important in netball, and Julie's timing is exceptional. It is this to which she attributes much of her success. She joined the national competition back when it was the Mobil Cup. The national netball competition then was in its infancy, and proved an excellent learning ground for a young coach learning the ropes. "It was an exciting time for the game, and as the national competition grew, I grew with it."

In a career as successful as Julie Fitzgerald's, there are inevitably highlights, and *Scoop* asked Julie what moments she cherishes.

"When the Sydney Swifts won their first premiership in 2001 against the Thunderbirds. Your first title is always very precious," she said, warmly.

"Our undefeated season in 2006 was outstanding, and we followed that up by winning the title again in 2007. The back-to-back win was very important to us: we wanted to prove that we could do it after our amazing success in 2006."

The players, however, are never far from Julie's mind, and she says

that "it is the players that are my highlights. To see them come through training and on to the court is one of the most important things to me. I'm very proud of every player."

The game against the Vixens will be a challenge for the NSW Swifts. "It's going to be tough," Julie says. "The Vixens and the Swifts are traditional rivals and the Vixens are going to be hungry for a win after being defeated by the Thunderbirds."

With two such talented teams, it's going to be a fantastic game for those of us cheering on the sidelines.



Julie Hoornweg,
Melbourne Vixens Head Coach