NYAC Men and Women Claim the 2012 Dallas Invite Championship

On November 3rd and 4th, the NYAC Men's and Women's water polo teams migrated down South for the first tournament of the year held in Dallas, Texas.  The 18 team tournament featured round robin brackets competing for the championship trophy by the weekend's end.  With the season just underway, this tournament acted as a litmus test for how conditioned the team is this early in the season.  Steered  CWPA Hall of Famer Head Coach Scott Schulte and newly minted NYAC manager Peter Felvegi, the men's and women's team were ready to leave the unpredictable New York weather due to Hurricane Sandy and rodeo with the best water polo competition Texas has to offer.

With the help of 2012 Olympic Gold Medalist, Jessica Steffens, the NYAC women jumped out to an early lead against the Viper Pigeons from West Houston, Texas and never looked back eventually winning 13-3.  2009 World Champion, Tanya Gandy, proved to be too swift for the Viper Pigeons to effectively guard and led the team with goals in the opening game.  In addition, Iona standouts, whole set Maggie Wood and attacker Mackenzie Mone, proved to be a lethal combination with their wily back-door shots.  In the second game, whole defender Stacy Werner kept the NYAC defense impenetrable with her multiple set steals and crisp counter attack passes against the University of Texas. NYAC attacker, Kendall Dacey, also kept the team ahead by capitalizing on crucial 5 meter shots. By the game's conclusion, NYAC women tallied 11 goals to University of Texas's 2.

The final game of the day featured a duel against the Mexican National Team.  2011 World University silver medalist, Leah Robertson, and former USC player, Kally Lucas's, speed went unmatched in the first quarter as Robertson drew out Mexico's defense to the weak-side leaving Lucas wide open for multiple strong-side shots. Furthermore, utility player Courtney Mee and NYAC captain Kelly Eaton all but halted Mexico's offensive game with repeated steals and blocks from both center and point position, respectively.  NYAC women triumphed over the Mexican National Team by a convincing 7goals.

Early Sunday morning, the Winged Foot women faced Dallas Invite host, Thunder Water Polo Club, for their first of two games on the final day of competition. Steffens employed her Olympic gold medal winning defensive press by leading the team in steals and setting up the NYAC offense for multiple man-up possessions which ended the game with NYAC 6 goals ahead of Thunder.  In a Texas twist, the final game of the tournament was against a men's club team, San Antonio.  Undeterred, NYAC goalie and 2012 National Champion, Danielle Ingram, proved why NYAC's defense is so revered by not allowing a single goal for the final game which ended with NYAC winning 8-0.

Not to be overshadowed by the women’s team, the NYAC men’s team also came to Dallas with a mission to start the season off with a bang.  In the first game of the day against Thunder Water Polo Club, current US National Team members Jeff Tyrell (Cal Berkeley) and Drac Wigo (Stanford) provided spectacular whole-set defense with multiple set steals and strategic fouls that all but baffled the Thunder offense.  The NYAC men closed out the opening match with a strong win at 11-3.  NYAC Goalie, Attila Hajdu (Hungary), guarded the goal posts with a vengeance in the second game against a competitive San Antonio team. Not only did he leave San Antonio scoreless but also capitalized on the counter attack speed of NYAC attacker Derek Lange for easy goals and an eventual 7-0 win.

Tired but undeterred, the NYAC men faced a very disciplined TOTEX team to close out the final game on first day of competition.  Realizing early on that the referees were not going to call many fouls, the NYAC offense had to step up the pace of the game to create TOTEX unforced errors.  Attackers Ross Sinclair (Santa Barbara) and Douglas Wigley (Princeton) rose to the occasion and outswam the TOTEX defense for easy man-up goals.  Long-time NYAC member, Carlos Omana (St. Francis) also contributed multiple back door shots for the final win of the day.

Day two of the tournament had the NYAC men face off against Dallas Water Polo Club on Sunday morning.  NYAC captain Jamal Motlagh (Princeton) and Adam Cunliffe (New Zealand) unleashed their whole set skills by sinking multiple back handed shots  to close the game 6 goals ahead of Dallas.  With a perfect record heading into the championship game, and the NYAC women already holding a championship trophy, the pressure was on for the NYAC men to deliver a win against the Mexican National Team.  Early on in the first quarter, whole set Peter Davis (Johns Hopkins) worked diligently for fouls and quick releases to post players for easy inside shots.  Finally, Brian Bacharach (Cal Berkeley) unleashed a dangerous out-side shot to complete the weekend with 13-3 win.

With both championship trophies in hand, the NYAC men and women sent a clear message to club teams across the US that they had every intention of challenging for another National Championship in the summer season.