By Kendall Dacey

NYAC Women Claim US Water Polo Crown

From July 19th through July 21st, the NYAC Women's water polo team competed in one of the biggest tournaments of the year - the US Open National Championships held in Atherton, CA.  The women's championship included twelve of the best teams in the United States ranging from Stanford University, Bruin Water Polo, Olympic Club and SOCAL Club.  As the reigning champions, NYAC Coaches Chris Vidale and John Hendrickson as well as Chairman Chris Judge had high expectations going into the start of the tournament.

The NYAC A team, led by 2012 Olympic Gold Medalist Heather Petri, pulled out a tough first win against Santa Barbara, 9-8.  The second game, however, saw the NYAC women get into an offensive groove.  Former US National Team members Tanya Gandy, Juliet Moss and Erika Figge delivered numerous defensive steals and counter-attacks that left Diablo scrambling for most of the game. NYAC eventually closed out the match with a 20-2 victory.

The second day of competition proved to be much of the same with quick wins against Olympic Club, 9-4 and SOCAL Gold, 11-7.  NYAC Captain Kelly Eaton and USC's Coleen O'Donnell worked offensive drives and kick-outs to provide the NYAC women with multiple man-up possessions.

With a perfect record thus far, the Winged Foot women needed one more win Sunday morning to punch their ticket into the final for the third consecutive year.  Olympic Silver Medalist Coralie Simmons's wily defense paralyzed SOCAL Black's 2-meter offensive plays which led to an easy four goal advantage by the end of 4th quarter.

The championship game pitted UCLA's Bruin water polo club against NYAC.  With current UCLA collegiate girls playing in the match, NYAC women knew they had to play smart water polo to win the tournament.  Playing in net, NYAC Goalie Cassie Wyckoff clinched the gold with spectacular saves from shots taken from set and perimeter positions.  Winning 10-8, the accolades kept pouring in with Wyckoff voted tournament MVP as well as Eaton and O'Donnell earning All-Tournament recognition.

The NYAC B team also played aggressively throughout the weekend with a win against American River 11-4.  Michigan's Kelsey Nolan and Iona's Erika Lauraitis kept the NYAC offense in the game with multiple perimeter shots. Yet, with hard fought losses against SOCAL Black, 13-5, and Bruin, 11-7, the B team finished in a strong 8th place.

Also making a big splash in the water polo arena is NYAC water polo player, Mackenzie Mone, who won gold with Team USA in the 19th annual Maccabiah Games against host Israel on Friday, July 26th.  Additionally, at the time of going to press, the US Women's Senior National Team advanced to the quarter finals of the US FINA World Championships with a 14-3 win over Brazil. Team USA has six NYAC players on the roster including 2012 Olympic Gold Medalists Betsey Armstrong, Courtney Mathewson, Melissa Seidemann and Kelly Rulon as well as Senior National Team Members Lauren Silver and KK Clark.