By Kendall Dacey

NYAC Men take US Open Crown

Not to be outdone by the NYAC Women, the NYAC Men's water polo team also sent two teams to compete in the 2013 US Open of Water Polo over the same July weekend in Atherton, CA.  Competing against a full fleet of water polo powerhouses such as Olympic Club, Stanford University and Newport Water polo, NYAC Coaches Scott Schulte and Jeff Hilk as well as Chairmen Chris Judge had a very busy weekend ahead of them.

NYAC A squad was stocked with a blend of size, speed and experience.  Anchoring the team were 2012 Olympians Chay Lapin and Jesse Smith in goal and 2-meter defense, respectively.  The tournament began with a demolition of UC Davis 24-3.  The second game of the round robin bracket was against CORE B.  Former National Team member Jeff Tyrell and three-time Olympian Wolf Wigo were relentless with their set and driving shots.  By the end of the 4th quarter, the Winged Foot men had won by a thirteen goal margin.

On the second day of competition, 2012 Romanian Olympians Cosmin Radu and Andrei Iosep delivered crushing offensive performances in whole-set with lightening quick back-handed goals to lead the team 17-4 against Newport Water Polo B team.  The outcome of the final game of the day, versus Bruin Water Polo, would take the top seed of the round robin bracket.  NYAC attackers Richie Hyden and Filip Sasic hammered away big goals from the very first quarter to solidify a 16-5 win.

Also clinching the 1st seed in their bracket was perennial rival Olympic Club which would make for a memorable semifinal.  New NYAC member Josh Samuels and recent Mediterranean Games competitor, Sasha Sadoryy, provided quick counter-attacks for the Winged Foot men.  However, Olympic Club's Peter Varellas, another 2012 US Olympian, proved to be difficult at the 2-meter position and challenged our offense throughout the match.  Ending in a 9-9 tie, the Winged Foot men punched their ticket to the championship game based on goal differential tallied throughout the tournament.

The championship game against Stanford was anticipated to be the best of the tournament and it certainly did not disappoint.  Going shot for shot in the first two quarters, NYAC's Radu equaled Stanford's Forrest Watkin's at three goals apiece.  Tied at the half, Stanford and NYAC battled hard for possession for the first 4 minutes of the third quarter. Needing a serious momentum boost, three-time Olympian Wolf Wigo netted a strong-side post shot that put NYAC ahead for good.  NYAC Goalie Chay Lapin proved to be impenetrable and blocked all of Stanford's goal attempts in the waning minutes of the 4th quarter.  At the final buzzer, the scoreboard read NYAC 11 to Stanford's 10. The championship trophy was coming home to the New York Athletic Club.  Additionally, Radu picked up MVP honors and Lapin and Wigo received All-Tournament nods.

NYAC B team also had a long weekend of tough competition with identical wins of 12-7 against Navy and UC Davis.  NYAC Captain Jamal Motlagh and Adam Cunliff paced the team offensively with whole-set prowess.  Quick left-hander Dan Werner and NYAC driver Douglas Wigley also put away some easy perimeter shots throughout the tournament.  However, NYAC B team suffered losses against Santa Barbara, 11-8 and CORE A, 11-5 to conclude the tournament in 11th place.

In other water polo news, the US Men's National Team saw their 2013 FINA World Championships in Barcelona, Spain, come to a close with a 10-6 loss to the host team.  NYAC water polo players filled 9 of the 13 spots on the squad including 2012 Olympians Merrill Moses, Tony Azevedo, Shea Buckner and John Mann as well as Janson Wigo, Andy Stevens, JW Krumholz, Mike Rosenthal and Matt De Tran rounding out the roster.  Additionally, NYAC water polo players Griffin White and Jeffrey Schwimer beat Israel for gold in the 19thannual Maccabiah Games.