



West Point wins 2nd straight blue cup

Two in a row.

West Point A captured its second consecutive Carolina Blue Cup Team Handball Tournament gold medal Sunday by knocking off Swim and Sport Club (SSC), N.J., by a 26-19 count at Fetzer Gym.

"We were really looking forward to playing these guys," said West Point coach John Turner. "We played them in the gold medal game last year (won by West Point 19-17). Both of those games were hard-fought battles."

SSC won the silver medal, and Garden City, N.J., won the bronze by defeating Carolina A 31-17. West Point B won the fifth place game over Atlanta A 16-15, Arlington defeated Carolina B 18-16 to take seventh place, and Atlanta B turned back Ohio State 20-17 for the ninth place win.

The gold medal win by West Point was almost anti-climatic to its semifinal round win over Garden City, however. A goal by Decker Cammack with 17 seconds remaining touched off a wild celebration as West Point upset the defending national champions in a 20-19 thriller.

"Steve Smith was very instrumental in that game with his shots from the wing," Turner said.

The big upset

Garden City had one goal when it came to Chapel Hill last weekend: take home the gold medal.

Being virtually an entire team of past and present Olympians and National Team players, winning comes naturally to Garden City. Just ask Chris Cappelmann.

"We're very close to each other as a team," Cappelmann said. "We've played with each other for 10 years now."

But the 20-19 loss to West Point ruined Garden City's gold medal hopes.

"We came down here as the defending national champions. We had very high expectations of winning, but the quality of teams here was a lot better than we had expected," Cappelmann said.

"We thought we would come down here, roll past the competition, and win the gold."

In its defense, Garden City was without its coach, who was vacationing in Switzerland, and its top goalie, a two-time Olympian.

"We're not blaming our losses on anything, though," Cappelmann said. "We just took all of our opponents lightly. We hadn't lost to West Point in seven years. But they are a very hungry team."

Cappelmann said Garden City would be back next year. "Dr. John Silva (coach of the Carolina team and coordinator of the Carolina Blue Cup) does a tremendous job of organizing this tournament.

"This is only its third year, and I expect it to be around for many years to come."

Talbert scores winner

The Blue Cup was split into two days, Saturday and Sunday, and the 10 teams were divided into two groupings, Blue group and White group. Each team played a round robin in its group on Saturday, and the top two teams in each group advanced to Sunday's crossover competition and medal rounds.

Carolina A had a 3-1 record Saturday, and it advanced into medal contention largely due to the heroics of Trent Talbert and Tim Ammer.

Carolina led West Point B 11-10 with less than two minutes to play in a Saturday matchup when West Point's Dave Francomb stole a pass a midcourt and drove in for the tying goal against Carolina goalie Ammer.

Then, with 30 seconds to play, Francomb again stole a pass and drove the length of the court for the potential game-winner. But Ammer stopped the shot and set up Talbert's heroics.

Talbert took a pass from John Silva on the left wing with just 15 seconds left and fired it in the goal for a 12-11 Carolina victory.

"I don't even remember what we called," said Talbert after the game. "They were over aggressive, and I was able to sneak inside and get open for the shot."

Ammer said he made a lucky guess on Francomb's second shot. "I came out and tried to decide where the ball would be coming from," Ammer said. "He was on the outside, so the odds were that he would throw it towards the inside, and he did."

Ammer said the win was vital for Carolina. "This was big for us," he said. "They were a B team, but they had three A team players with them (legal under tournament rules).

"It's always good to beat West Point."

— Rodney Cline

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OMNIBUS

THE DAILY TAR HEEL WEEKEND MAGAZINE

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