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Tauranga Whai storm to Tauihi basketball crown

Story by Sport • 3mo • 🕐 2 min read

Tauranga Whai have proved stormed to their first Tauihi national women's basketball crown with an emphatic 90-71 win over Wellington's Tokomanawa Queens in Tauranga.

It was a remarkable turnaround for the Alex Stojkovic-coached Whai, who won their first match and then dropped their next five as they battled without injured stars Mikayla Cowling and Morgan Yeager .

But with Cowling and Yeager back and McKenna Dale arriving from the US, they hit their straps as the season wore on, upsetting last year's champions Kāhu 76-63 in the semi-finals and entering the final confident in their fast-paced game.

The Queens won the inaugural title two years ago, but had to settle for being beaten finalists two years in a row as they found themselves outclassed on the day.

The Whai sped to a 12-point first quarter lead, with Ashley Joens signalling their style of attack with an early three point jump shot, followed up by Dale with two more from beyond the arc.

They dominated the second quarter, extending their lead to 20 and it was 68-47 at the end of the third quarter, and they held their nerve in the final quarter to register a comfortable victory.

Yaeger, named the final's MVP, led the way on points, with 19 plus four assists, backed up by Dale (16) and Lara McSpadden (14).

Louise Brown never gave up for the Queens, also scoring 19 points, recording five assists and 17 rebounds, while Jihyun Park scored 17.

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"We never give up. We trusted in each other, we trusted the process, our coaches trusted us and believed in us, and I think that really brought us together and we found our stride," she told Sky Sport.

Lou Brown said she was proud of her team for making the final for the third year in a row.

She had a succinct reason for the Whai's success. "They can shoot the heck out of it."

Brown said the Whai's broken style of play and notching three pointers was a tough style to guard against.

Tauihi Basketball Aotearoa final, at Queen Elizabeth Youth Centre, Tauranga.

Tauranga Whai 90 At Queen Elizabeth Youth Centre, Tauranga: **Tauranga Whai 90** (Morgan Yaeger 19, McKenna Dale 16, Lara McSpadden 14), beat **Tokomanawa Queens 71** (Louise Brown 19, Jihyun Park 17, Jordan Horston 13, Stella Beck 13). Quarter scores: 31-19, 57-37, 68-47.

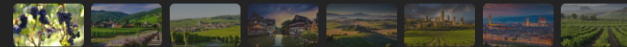## More for You

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