

Gators Chomp Down At 2010 PowerBar Cup

August 28-29, 2010
Dynamo Swim Center
Atlanta, GA

Regardless of measure, the 2010 PowerBar Cup was the largest in its twelve year history. Most open teams (15), most high school teams (9), most games (48), most Dynamo players participating (32) and most PowerBars consumed (724). Oh, and also the most overtime periods (3). That last one is important later, so keep it in mind.

In the high school division, each of the nine teams showed improvement over the Fall 2009 season. In early round games, perennially strong St. Pius X and Collins Hill teams showed they both planned to continue their winning ways. As expected, St. Pius and Collins Hill advanced unchallenged to the championship game.

As the first half of the high school championship game unfolded on Saturday afternoon, the two teams traded goals and seemed to promise a tight affair. Collins Hill displayed slightly better ball movement but St. Pius was physically stronger and had a deeper bench. The score knotted 5-5 at the half. After several minutes of scoreless third quarter action, the strength and depth of the St. Pius roster took hold. The Golden Lions devastated Collins Hill with a natural goal from two-meters followed with 4 of 5 man-up advantages to set the score at 10-5. Clearly tired, Collins Hill never quit in the second half, even earning five man-up advantages in the fourth quarter alone, but couldn't score against the deep St. Pius bench.

Every high school team showed improvement, but none more than first-year team Norcross. Head coach Carlos Santini, also a key Dynamo Water Polo Club player, answered the call to serve and showed immediate impact. Growing up in Puerto Rico, Santini learned water polo from fabled coach Mujica at Loyola AC. Santini's Norcross team, all absolute beginners, used strong fundamentals and a joy for the game to finish third, beating 2006 league champion Wheeler 11-7. Interestingly, Coach Mujica's son, Jerry, was one of the founders of Dynamo Water Polo Club in 1991. Now back in Puerto Rico, Jerry returned to Dynamo two years ago with his Loyola AC teammates for the 2008 PowerBar Cup and flew home with the trophy in their luggage.

In the open division, fifteen teams from Georgia, Florida, North Carolina and Texas played for the PowerBar Cup trophy and \$250 worth of PowerBar performance nutrition products that come with it.

The first-year team of Jacksonville (FL) WPC was the surprise of the weekend. Former Dynamo WPC stars Manny & Mary Beth Torres, started the club earlier this year after they relocated to the NE Florida city. They quickly found several former Naval Academy players among the large U.S. Navy population in the area and they were off and running. Paced by balanced scoring and excellent goal-keeping, JAX edged Raleigh (NC) CAPS 7-5 in the fifth-place game. "It was great to see Raleigh back in action after over five years in mothballs," explained PowerBar Cup tournament director Len Simonis, "and Mary Beth and Manny clearly have great momentum in Jacksonville."

In the third-place game, TOTEX (TX) returned to their dominant form of Saturday and knocked out Orlando Patriot (FL) 16-11. Earlier on Sunday, TOTEX lost to Dynamo A 8-7 in an overtime game that included what one TOTEX player believed a game-changing call in the extra frame.

“It was great to have TOTEX at the PowerBar Cup this year,” explained Dynamo player Stuart Sheldon “but they made me feel old.” Sheldon coached San Antonio high school water polo and swimming with TOTEX starter Tom Andrews’ father in the early 1990s. “I countered them hard a few times, won several sprints and felt better right away,” Sheldon added with a grin. The Ron Jeremy-style mustaches worn by a number of TOTEX players were the talk of the tournament.

The University of Florida Gators advanced to face Dynamo A with a tight 9-8 win over Patriot. The Dynamo/UF championship game was a classic gem in this rivalry, which dates back to 1992. The Gators used a shallow two meter set to draw fouls at the 5 meter line that led to immediate shots...and goals. Dynamo A needed almost the entire first half to adjust, trailed by four at the half and seemed to have zero momentum

“Because the shallow UF set forced them out to 7 meters and beyond, we needed to drop off UF point and flat players,” said Dynamo A player and former Gator Garrett Freeman. “Once we actually executed, the results were immediate.” Dynamo almost completely shut down the unorthodox UF attack and used their trademark “Go, Go Dynamo!” counterattack to swing momentum back their way. Dynamo perimeter players began to feed their sets, especially Anthony Beamon, who wreaked havoc inside. Regulation ended in a 9-9 tie and the score remained unchanged after one sudden death period. UF earned the opportunity to end the game on a penalty shot, but Dynamo goalie Lawrence Edwards delivered a massive save that brought the Dynamo bench and packed bleachers to their feet.

In the second sudden-death period, Dynamo continued to hammer away at UF from the inside. Their point blank shots found all sorts of barriers: crossbars, posts, goalie arms. “We hit so many bars that last period our team needed a designated driver” muttered one frustrated Dynamo player after the game.

After the game and medal ceremony, Dynamo players shared stories of their twenty-year rivalry with the Gators. Six Dynamo players, all in their forties and fifties, know the entire story.

“I did not know that we were rivals nor the fact that we started as a group of international grad students” UF Gator player James Madison said. “In my opinion I think our rivalry is a positive relationship. We look forward to the PowerBar Cup every year and this year was the best.”

“Heck, some of us played UF before most of these kids were even born!” came anonymously from a cluster of Dynamo players.

Plans are already under way for the 2011 PowerBar Cup. Mark your calendars for August 27-28 and visit www.dynamowaterpolo.com to keep up on the latest tournament information.

For complete 2010 PowerBar Cup results please visit <http://www.dynamowaterpolo.com/powerbar/10.shtml>

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Dynamo's Chris Sirras (l) and Paul Homenock (r) attempt to prove you can block a shot with your eyes closed. Dynamo won this game against Orlando Windermere on their way to a second-place finish in the 2010 PowerBar Cup.

Photo courtesy of Emily Fess

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Goalie Lawrence Edwards feeds the “Go, Go Dynamo” counterattack during the 2010 PowerBar Cup. Dynamo lost the championship game 10-9 to the University of Florida Gators in double sudden-death overtime.

Photo courtesy of Emily Fess

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Field players watch Dynamo goalie Lawrence Edwards block a deep wing shot in their 8-7 sudden death semi-final victory over TOTEX (TX) at the 2010 PowerBar Cup.

Photo courtesy of Emily Fess

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Jacksonville player Manny Torres (white) fights to hold inside water in action from the 2010 PowerBar Cup.

Photo courtesy of Emily Fess

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The University of Florida Gators celebrate their 10-9 double sudden-death overtime championship win over host club Dynamo A at the 2010 PowerBar Cup in Atlanta, Georgia.

Photo courtesy of Emily Fess

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Dynamo Water Polo Club accepts their hard-fought second place medals after a 10-9 double overtime sudden death loss to the University of Florida Gators in the 2010 PowerBar Cup. “Seven of us are old enough to be those guys fathers, for crying out loud” said one of the Gators. “I think we did quite well!”

Photo courtesy of Emily Fess

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