



Dynamo Finishes 7th @ Orlando Halloween Invitational

Dynamo Water Polo Club either went 1-3 or 2-2 against a tough field at the 2011 Halloween Invitational hosted by Orlando Water Polo. Why "or"? Well, it depends on your "Trick or Treat" priorities. We'll come back to that later.

Dynamo WPC walked on deck at the Orlando International YMCA on Saturday morning to the news that their three-team bracket was the hardest in the tournament. With DWPC sandwiched between overall number one seed and defending champs Miami Beach (formerly FIU) and Great Whites, another experienced Miami-area team, it made sense.

The Great Whites and Dynamo WPC squared off first in the group. The Great Whites ran their offense through a physically massive (6'5" 275+ lbs.) center forward formerly on the Cuban national team, while Dynamo countered with an active defense and a motion-based, ball-side drive offense.

The two squads traded jabs throughout the first half. Dynamo held the lead as the third quarter began but it was anything but a settled affair. Led by a number of excellent saves by goalie Lawrence Edwards, Dynamo reeled off an impressive quarter and hung the Whites up for good as the Miami team physically cracked from all the swimming. Dynamo stretched a two goal lead into seven over the seven minute stop-time third.

With game in hand, Dynamo worked the final quarter to eat as much time off the clock as possible. Their lead continued to build as the Great Whites had little energy left. Dynamo tossed the Great Whites 22-10 then downed a pile of PowerBar Recovery bars and prepared to face Miami Beach in the afternoon.

Led by legendary coach Paul Bechazy (a former national-level Hungarian player himself) most of the Miami Beach roster had played together through high school, club, college and now senior-level action. A well integrated team indeed.

Beach led the first quarter but the game remained tight as the two team traded outside sniper shots (MB) and inside water moves (DWPC). After Dynamo scored back-to-back goals off wing passes into driving team-mates, Miami Beach extended their stifling, physical defense across the entire pool. At first this pressure led to several Dynamo errors and Beach goals at the other end. Soon, however, DWPC perimeter players began to draw exclusions away from the ball and the squad went 3-4 on extra man opportunities to shrink a five goal lead to two at the half.

Amazing Beach goal keeping and more perimeter bullets rebuilt the five goal lead early in the third. Once again Dynamo hunkered down and went to work with ball-side drives and clawed to within one. Beach answered with an immediate goal and the third ended as it began, a two-goal Beach advantage.

Beach finally adjusted to the driving Dynamo attack in the fourth and sent an extra top defender through to clog the middle. Dynamo did not adjust and the turnovers mounted. The cohesive Miami Beach squad punished almost every one with a goal at the other end and the defending champs



slowly pulled away to win 18-10.

In the Sunday morning, cross-bracket semis, Dynamo faced the skilled and experienced but short-benched South Florida WP. DWPC got off to its traditional Day 2 slow start and trailed early as SFWP perimeter players scored several lobs over their groggy heads. Down by as many as four goals at one point, DWPC drives began to generate exclusions, including two on SFWP #6, one of their two best players. Dynamo took many open first half shots but the SoFla goalie, who played his collegiate ball at Georgia Tech, delivered block after block after block.

Dynamo used the third period to work the SoFla lead down to two. Efforts to take #6 into the middle for his third exclusion and an early exit proved fruitless but his defensive impact diminished greatly. As the third quarter wound down, SoFla had yet to relinquish the lead but the margin was two and Dynamo had the momentum.

Early in the fourth, Dynamo scored a quick rebound goal off a barred penalty shot when SoFla failed to flank the DWPC shooter. The margin was down to just one. Despite just a single substitute, SoFla found an untapped energy reserve and stayed with the deeper Dynamo squad. The SoFla goalie continued his excellent play and turned away a flurry of DWPC attempts.

Down two with just over a minute to play, Dynamo never gave up. Their defense forced a turnover that led to a counter goal and a one goal margin with 0:31 seconds in the game. SFWP coach Michael Goldenberg wisely used a timeout to spread his squad across their defensive half of the pool in a soggy version of the famous UNC basketball "Four Corners" offense.

Dynamo pressure kept the ball in the goalie's hand until his deep pass to the Dynamo corner as the shot clock expired. Technically Dynamo had one second of possession and a goal throw to come but the game ended 10-9 for South Florida.

In the final game of the weekend, DWPC was to play Daytona Beach for seventh while SFLWP A (senior) faced SFLWP B (high school) for fifth. Goldenberg's "B" team was nothing of the sort. A regular high finisher at USA Water Polo Junior Olympics, his young roster included a player just back from a spot on the USA roster at the FINA Junior World Championships. Young? Yes. Push overs? No way.

Consistent with their twenty year history of sportsmanship, Dynamo offered to play SoFla B, to give them variety...and not another intrasquad scrimmage. SoFla and Daytona Beach agreed so the switch was on.

Unlike its earlier games, Dynamo struck first and held a one or two-goal lead into the third. As the third and early fourth quarters progressed, the SoFla B team's youthful energy exposed cracks in the Dynamo transition to defense and delivered a three goal SoFla lead and 10-13 score with less than two minutes to play.

Dynamo heroically combined a "press to foul" defense and strategic use of a time out to force consecutive turnovers and generate back-to-back DWPC goals. In a carbon copy of the morning tilt



against SoFla A, Dynamo was within one with under 0:45 seconds to go. Again a Goldenberg time out, again the "four corners" offense, again Dynamo pressing and chasing all over the SoFla defensive end of the field as the shot clock wound down to zero.

Dynamo immediately called a time out and moved to set offense with a glowing 0:08 seconds on the game clock. A pass into set from the point hoped to deliver either an immediate goal or exclusion and quick shot. Unfortunately neither happened as SoFla swam away with a 13-12 nail-biter.

So, goblins and ghouls, Dynamo went 1-3 (including two one-goal loses) to finish 8th if you "Trick" and count the SoFla B result. "Treat" Dynamo for the sportsmanship (and the assumed win over Daytona Beach) and it's 2-2 and 7th place.

The Dynamo squad finished proud of their effort against three solid Miami-area squads. (FYI, Miami is the undisputed capital of water polo in the South.). A break here or there and the two one-goal losses could've been wins. Most importantly, the team showed improvement and tenacity as they had fun and continued to built the Dynamo WPC name.

Final tournament standings:

1. Miami Beach
2. Riptides
3. Loyola
4. Orlando Black
5. SFWPC A
6. SFWPC B
- 7. Dynamo**
8. Daytona
9. USF
10. Orlando Blue
11. Greatwhites

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