

Wanilla Rangers Dominate A1 Netball Grand Final

Wanilla Rangers dominated Saturday's Port Lincoln Netball Association A1 grand final with a prevailing 18 goal win over Tasman Imperial.

A visibly hungry Rangers side applied immediate defensive pressure across the court making their opponents work tirelessly to convert in the goal circle and forcing several costly turnovers early from Tasman Imperial, who were notably without their star shooter, Tate Rawson. Whilst both teams had early nerves resulting in errors, it was Wanilla who were able to capitalise on the mistakes of their opponents by converting on the scoreboard. Rangers shooting duo of Emily Woolford and Summer Pederson held and moved exceptionally well in the goal circle, shooting accurately and rebounding strongly. Tasman Imperial coach Tayla Helbig made several early changes to try and combat the quick movement of Wanilla Rangers and whilst Rangers led 15 – 8 at quarter time, Tasman Imperial appeared to have settled into the game, shaking off their nerves in the latter stages of the quarter.

Rangers legendary coach, Donna Charlton, remained confident in her team's ability and stuck with her initial starting seven in the second quarter with Tasman Imperial again making several positional changes to try and contend Wanilla's dominant start to the game. Tasman Imperial's Simoan Hayman moved to centre and Sarah Noske to wing defence in an effort to rattle Wanilla's hard to match Ellie Cooper and Kobi Keeley. Cooper and Keeley were fierce quiet achievers across the court gaining several touches resulting in turnovers, driving the ball with immense speed and feeding into the goal circle beautifully to the Rangers shooters. Part way through the quarter, Tasman Imperial's Tate Rawson and Mel Semmler were brought on as the Rangers mid-court was becoming a headache and difficult to shut down. Semmler matched Cooper well for speed and an entertaining tussle ensued. Rawson's ankle injury, incurred in Tasman Imperials semi-final loss to the Rangers, led to her leaving the court noticeably limping after only a few minutes of action. Tasman Imperial shooters Tayla Helbig and Lauren Simes steadied their side with some accurate shooting but were well held and had to work hard with the ever-reliant Jess Nielsen and Taryn Beinke playing a tight, clean and relentless circle defence that helped Rangers extend their first quarter lead to 10 with the score at halftime 28 – 18 to the Rangers.

Heading into the second half, Rangers again opted for no positional changes. Tasman Imperial persisted with their same lineup from the end of the second quarter, appearing positive that the matchups they had made against Rangers were working. An early error by Tasman Imperials was capitalised by Wanilla and the margin soon increased. Tasman Imperials shooting accuracy led to a goal for goal style of match play early in the quarter. Wanilla continued to apply pressure down the entire court with the application of

consistent zone defence and all players constantly with strong hands over every single ball. The Rangers tight team defence was hard to beat and resulted in back-to-back turnovers with both Keeley and Nielsen creating timely turnovers to Wanilla's advantage just as Tasman Imperials were matching the scoring of Rangers goal for goal for the quarter. With a healthy lead, Wanilla opted to make their first tactical change for the game bringing Lily Perham on into goal defence and Neilson moving into goalkeeper. Tasman Imperial's defenders Jessica Harris and Kalea Siegert went head-to-head with Rangers Woolford and Pederson but Ranger's shooting accuracy, rebounding and quick movement of the ball around the goal circle by classy mid courters Cooper and Keeley was too solid and the three-quarter time lead extended to 15 goals with a game score of 43 – 28 to Rangers.

With a hard to beat scoreline, Tasman Imperial again made a number of changes to their fourth quarter lineup attempting to reduce the deficit and break through a dominant Rangers mid-court display with Tayla Milligan brought into wing defence, Kalea Siegert moved to centre and Hayman to wing attack. A poised Rangers did not take their foot off the accelerator and charged ahead. Full credit must go to Rangers wing defence Emily Young who had opposed four different players by the start of the fourth quarter. Wanilla's defence lineup of Young, Nielsen and Perham stayed steady, persistent and they continued to defend cleanly, backing up time and time again as the ball went end to end. Rangers grew on their considerable quarter time advantage by the end of the game to an unbeatable 18 goal lead. To their credit, Tasman Imperials threw everything they had at Wanilla with tactical changes galore and some well-matched tussles on court, but nothing could stem the bleeding on the scoreboard from a dominant Wanilla Rangers who were able to withstand what was thrown their way. Rangers control across the court the entire game resulted in a 56 – 38 final scoreline to Rangers. Wanilla Ranger's performance was dominant from start to finish, as they were crowned the 2024 Port Lincoln Netball Association A1 grand finalists.