

2026 A1 GRAND FINAL MATCH REPORT

TASMAN IMPERIALS VS BOSTON

It was a rematch of the second semifinal for the 2025 A1 Grand Final between Tasman Imperials and Boston in PLNA Netball. After being runner-up in 2024, Tasman Imperials were hoping to go the next step this year, and Boston were looking to break a 9-year premiership drought.

Tasman Imperials took the first center pass and converted to get the first score on the board. Boston were a little shaky, turning the ball over in their attack end only for Tasman Imperials to miss; Tess Watson at GD for Boston rebounded strongly and sent the ball down the court where it was converted by Lauren McDonald at GS.

This triggered an onslaught of goals by Boston with Watson and Hannah Barker at GK creating multiple turnovers which were converted by McDonald and Taya Fowler at GA. Their on-court pressure was relentless and caused Tasman Imperials to make a lot of unforced errors; soon they were out to a 10-goal lead.

Karlie Sargent at C for Tasman Imperials was fighting hard for her team to create drive down the court but was being well defended by her opposition center in Gracen Dyer. Boston remained settled and took an 8-goal lead into the first break 18-10.

Boston took the opening center pass and Fowler quickly converted and Tasman Imperials immediately replied through Lauren Simes at GS. A turnover by Watson for Boston saw a long bomb into McDonald who converted truly.

Tasman Imperials were implementing a full zone defense which was causing Boston some headaches with transitioning the ball down the court. They had made a dent in Boston's lead when play was stopped due to a serious knee injury to Watson at GD for Boston. She was carried off and replaced by Loka Anderson who was returning to play after being out with her own knee injury for the past 6 weeks.

Boston immediately felt the impact of Watson's injury, Tasman Imperials subbed Tayla Helbig into GA replacing Lily Nicholls and they seized the opportunity to pile on the goals whilst Boston rallied and tried to find their rhythm again. More changes by Boston saw Georgia Palm introduced to the game at C with Gracen Dyer moving to GD to replace Anderson.

Matilda Taylor at WA for Boston and Tayla Milligan at WD for Tasman Imperials were locked in a fierce battle as they fought for position around the goal circle. McDonald and Fowler stood tall in the Boston goal circle against the experienced Jessica Harris at GD and young Bolu Ekujumi at GK.

Tasman Imperials had a better quarter however Boston still held a 6-goal lead at the long break 31-25.

Teams remained unchanged at the start of the third quarter, Boston scored the opening goal and then turned the ball over through some bad passing to allow Tasman Imperials to score the next 2.

The full court pressure by both teams went to another level this quarter with skillful play and passing up and down the court as they traded goals. Jordan Sladdin at WA for Tasman Imperials was finding the ring and feeding her goalies well; her opposition WD Estelle Gray was driving hard out of defense for Boston.

As both teams began to tire, accurate shooting by Simes for Tasman Imperials saw them reduce the margin back to 2 goals mid way through the quarter. Boston immediately made some changes to bring on the fresh legs of Paige Rees at WD and move Gray to WA to give Taylor a rest.

Play was frenetic up and down the court. Boston was still holding steady, but Tasman Imperials were coming at them with everything they had. Boston maintained a slim 3-goal lead at the last break 42-39.

Tasman Imperials got the first goal of the final quarter and Harris rebounded strongly after a Boston missed goal to send the ball down the goal end looking to reduce the margin to 1. Barker and Dyer were working overtime for Boston in the goal circle and with the assistance of Rees at WD they forced the turnover back which was converted to keep their noses in front.

McDonald and Fowler showed great maturity for 2 young players in a Grand Final; their movement and aerial ability was outstanding to watch and instrumental in keeping Boston in front.

The crowd was very vocal by this stage, cheering their teams on and trying to give them that extra edge. The standard of netball all over the court was immense as Tasman Imperials tried to hunt down Boston's lead.

As time ticked down the defensive pressure of Boston was elite; Tasman Imperials goalies missed a few shots and Boston pounced, sending the ball down to their attack end through patient passing to be converted.

With minutes to go, Boston engaged in smart play, retaining the ball at all costs to wind the clock down.

As the final whistle sounded it was Boston who were triumphant winning the 2025 A1 premiership by 4 goals 57-53. Best on Court Lauren McDonald from Boston.

An outstanding game of netball and an absolute spectacle for spectators.