

Jaguars team triumphant defending Brutal Fruit title

The Gauteng Jaguars lifted the Brutal Fruit Netball Premier League trophy for the second consecutive year after a 49-47 victory over the Western Cape Southern Stings at the University of Pretoria's Rembrandt Hall on Sunday.

The last time these two teams met, in the first round of the tournament, the Jaguars claimed a comfortable 51-43 win, but it was a dramatically different match this time around, with so much more at stake.

This was the Stings' first-ever appearance in a final, and the Jaguars' fifth. But the Western Cape side looked far from underdogs against the defending champions. The first quarter was a tight one, which ended 12-9 in the Gauteng side's favour.

In the second quarter the Capetonians took advantage of a loss of concentration by the Jaguars, levelling the scores at 14-14 and then surging in front.

Their lead grew to six goals at one point, but the Jaguars managed to return to their game plan and

close the gap to three by half-time.

A stern talking-to by coach Jenny van Dyk as the Jaguars left the court at the break must have done the trick as they soon got things back on track, levelling the scores.

But they still didn't quite regain that momentum they've enjoyed throughout the tournament, never managing to take the lead and allowing simple mistakes into their game.

They reached the final break three goals down once again.

The Jaguars were not going to let their title go that easily, though.

They came back fighting in the final period and finally levelled the scores at 41-all. Then they took the lead with just over six minutes left in the match.

Those final minutes were frantic ones, with the lead exchanging hands, and the scores were level with just 60 seconds to go.

The Jaguars then snuck in front and the Stings had a chance to equalise, but a wild pass into the circle went long and the victory was ultimately handed to the

defending champions.

Tshina Mdau was named player of the match for her efforts on wing defence for the Jaguars, while the Free State Crinums centre, Khanyisa Chawane, was named the player of the tournament.

"We had a good idea what to expect but I think the Stings' defence was quite hectic and they gave us a good go in that circle," said a relieved Jaguars coach, Jenny van Dyk, afterwards.

As for her half-time talk, Van Dyk explained that sometimes you need that bit of a break away to gather your thoughts and to change the plan and decide where to pin the pressure so that the team could get rewards on different spaces on court.

"It worked for us. We've shown a lot of character. This team really wanted to win. We just knew we had to attack harder.

We've had five finals in a row, two wins and we've gone unbeaten in this whole tournament, which gives us 18 games unbeaten in a row, so that's fantastic and shows consistency," Van Dyk concluded.



The triumphant Gauteng Jaguars netball team boast with their medals and trophy after successfully defending their title as champion in the Brutal Fruit Netball Premier League by beating the Southern Stings of the Western Cape 49-47 in the final. Photo: Samuel Shivambu/BackpagePix.