(Apologies for the erroneous score and subsequent match report posted yesterday evening. The previous article accounted for the first 50 minutes of play. Below is an updated, accurate account of the Women's Collegiate All Star Championship.)

Pittsburgh, PA - When the Women's Collegiate All Star Championship (formerly the U23 championship) began in 2002, the Midwest quickly established itself as the union to beat. After four consecutive titles, the Thunderbirds were finally dethroned in 2006, and since then, they've returned to every title match save one. But a fifth title has eluded the squad, and during the previous two finals, the Midwest was outscored 68-17.

But 2011 saw the Midwest return to form, and the territory earned its history-leading fifth title after first defeating the West 33-17 in the semifinals, then holding onto a 26-25 victory over the USA U20s in the championship match. The junior Eagles had advanced to the final after a 24-5 semifinal win over defending champion Northeast.

The Midwest dominated the first half, especially in the rucks and breakdown, according to Midwest assistant coach Roger Riley. The Thunderbirds stalled the junior Eagles' typically continuous game, which relies on keeping the ball alive at all costs and getting behind the defense.

Midwest outside center Aylisa Lee and NASC MVP Brittany Houston teamed up for the game's first score and conversion after 18 minutes. But before the half, USA fullback Meya Bizer was able to pull her side within one, nailing two penalties for the 7-6 scoreline.

All American wing Tyra McGrady had the final say of the first 40, motoring around her opposite for the Midwest's second try of the day. Houston's conversion gave the Thunderbirds a 14-6 lead into the break.

"She's a field general," Riley said of the tournament MVP. "She had a marvelous game. Brit is about to graduate but won't be a full-time student next semester, so there's a lot of talk about where she's going to play her club rugby."

Scrumhalf Houston kept her team on the front foot come second half, and No. 8 and captain Joanna Kitlinski scored two minutes into the half, 19-6.

"She was the heart and soul of the team," Riley said of the All American from Grand Valley State. "She had a marvelous, solid game, all game long. She's not a vocal leader; it's more of a 'Follow me, I'm playing.'"

Two minutes later and wing Kaelene Lundstrom was adding another five points and Houston another two for the 26-6 lead. Although all but one try came through the Midwest backs, Riley insisted that the forward pack were the star of the show, and their strong performance around the breakdown trickled down the ranks.

But then the Thunderbirds slipped into complacency, comfortable with its 20-point lead despite 35 minutes on the clock. Eager to light up the scoreboard, the junior Eagles took advantage.

The USA U20s became more competitive in the breakdown, drove through the gain line, and most importantly, started using its pace out wide.

With 15 minutes remaining, Bizer added to her point total with a converted try, and six minutes later, hooker Jen Sandifer was doing the same. Bizer earned her 15th point of the day with the conversion.

Down only six points (26-20), the USA threw everything they had at the Midwest, and at the 80th minute, substitute Brown scored to pull within one.

With the conversion, the U20s win; without, and the Midwest wins by one. Unfortunately for Bizer, who's also Woodlands (Texas) High School's place kicker, the extra points fell short, and the Thunderbirds held onto the 26-25 win.

"Given more time, I don't necessarily think the U20s would have won," Riley opined. "They did get good momentum, but there were several times when the Midwest came back to challenge their line; it's was back and forth."

Riley credited the Midwest coaching staff of Sue Whitwell, forwards coach, who also leads the senior women's Thunderbirds and Chicago Women; Twin City Amazons' Rebecca Radtke, the backs coach; and of course, head coach Steve Murra.

"They were really on top of their game," Riley commended. "They did their homework and really honed players into cohesive units."

Immediately after the final, prop Melissa Krug (Minnesota), Morgan Johnson (North Dakota State), flanker Kendra Klump (Minnesota State), No. 8 Joanna Kitlinski (Grand Valley State), scrumhalf Brittany Houston (UW Milwaukee) and wing Tyra McGrady (Indiana Univ.) were all invited to the All Americans.

In the third place match, the Northeast bettered the West 29-12 and will remain in next year's Tier 1 competition, while the Mustangs will be relegated to Tier 2 and replaced by the South.

NRU's Evan Hoese (Radcliffe), who was the DII College Championship MVP, was exceptional on the day, logging two tries from the flyhalf position. Katie O'Malley (Stonehill College) converted both of Hoese's tries, and with the addition of Elizabeth Fierman's five-pointer, helped build a 19-0 lead before the West responded.

The Mustangs cracked the scoreboard when Julia Fortkort, who logged two tries against the Midwest on Friday, added another score to her point total (19-5). Teammate and hooker Rachel Ryan followed suit, and Sam Miller's conversion pulled the West to within a converted try, 19-12.

But the Northeast had a little more in the tank and was able to send All American outside center Blaine Martin (Brown) and Sam Luther (Rhode Island) across the try line for the 29-12 victory.

Tier 1 Championship
Midwest 26
Tries: Ly, McGrady, Kitlinski, Lundstrom
Conversions: Houston 3

USA U20s
Tries: Bizer, Sandifer, Brown
Conversions: Bizer 2
Penalties: Bizer 2

Tier 1 Consolation
Northeast 29
Tries: Hoese 2, Fierman, Martin, Luther
Conversions: O'Malley 2

West 12
Tries: Fortkort, Ryan
Conversions: Miller