

## NRU Takes Another NASC Title

Written by Jackie Finlan  
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The Northeast did it again. The Nessies successfully defended its Women's All Star Championship Tier I title with a convincing 29-0 win over the Midwest in the final, and did with a lean squad that varied greatly from last year's championship team.



NRU's Phaidra Knight on a breakaway.

But even though the Northeast was missing 12 of last year's players, there was little lost in the way of dominance. Veteran all stars like Jamie Burke, who was named MVP, Phaidra Knight, Amy Daniels, Kitt Wagner, Katy Dowty, Rebecca Brafman, Kristin Bonomo and Stacy Baker upped the performance of the newer players for a great winning weekend.

After watching the Midwest's 19-12 win over the Pacific Coast on Friday, the Northeast was expecting a physical contest and started its biggest lineup size wise. The team knew it had to play at a national-team standard and capitalize on any mistakes offered them.

The team responded accordingly and played the game that coach Richard Ashfield was looking for.

"In the first game [against Southern California], we played well at times and had some good individual performances," Ashfield said of Friday's 24-3 win. "We spoke a lot about improving our team game and they really unified today."

Physicality was the name of the game today, and the NRU let it pervade every aspect of play. Its scrum dominated, and if Ashfield could have awarded the entire front row the MVP honor, he would have. Rosie Meisner's expert jumping and handling solidified the lineouts, and flanker Kristin Bonomo was a workhorse around the pitch. In the backs, Amy Daniels stepped into flyhalf and set up center Rebecca Brafman for a number of rumbling runs past the gain line. And wing Jen Kuchar was outstanding on the day, punishing players who attempted to attack out

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wide.

Meisner accounted for the team's first two tries, which came after sustained forward phases down the pitch, and Knight, Bonomo and Dowty tacked on the second-half tries. Kath Ryan and Kuchar split the conversions.

The Northeast allowed only three points-against all weekend, a fantastic accomplishment. But one of the biggest positives of the weekend was the performances of its younger players, several of whom were groomed in the NRU U23 program, led by Tony Brown, and which is also enjoying back-to-back all-star championships. The joint success is a promising one, and sure to keep producing championship teams.