

Box Lacrosse Nationals 2012

Team BC Female Box Teams Golden



**2012 Team BC Female Midget Team
Gold Medalist**



**2012 Team BC Female Bantam Team
Gold Medalist**

Double Gold!

For the first time in Female Box Lacrosse history, Team BC tasted the fruits of victory after winning a pair of gold medals at the Female Box Lacrosse National Championships. A first of many firsts this summer for female box lacrosse!

Since 2009, Ontario has dominated the Female Bantam National Championships winning three straight, while the Team Ontario Midgets won the inaugural 2011 event in New Westminster. Team Ontario proved to be Team BC's arch nemesis in 2012, but with very different results.

The 2012 Canadian Lacrosse Association Female Midget and Bantam Box Lacrosse National Championships took place July 29 to August 2 at Bear Mountain Arena in Victoria. This tournament marked the first time the Female Nationals were hosted off mainland Canada, in BC's traditional lacrosse-rich community of Victoria.

Team BC came into the 2012 Nationals as underdogs after settling for silvers in 2011. But with the additions of ex-WLA and NLL star players Dan Stroup (Bantam) and Pat Coyle (Midget) behind the benches, this year's version of Team BC would prove to be forces to be reckoned with!

Team BC Female Bantams had a nearly flawless round robin with five wins and a loss. Round robin scores were: BC 15 Nova Scotia 0, Ontario 4 BC 3 (OT), BC 9 Alberta 2, BC 17 Nova Scotia 0 and BC 5 Ontario 3. Team BC met a physical Team Alberta squad in the cross-over match, with BC shutting out their western rivals by five goals, setting up another BC-Ontario gold medal showdown.

With BC and Ontario splitting their round robin games -- 4-3 Ontario in overtime and 5-3 Team BC in the second match, it was as evenly matched a final game could be. The rubber match didn't disappoint! Going into his second gold medal match in as many years, Head Coach Dan Stroup's confidence level couldn't have been higher.

"We had the same game plan as last year, injuries played a big part in last year's gold game," remembered Stroup. "We felt very confident going into the gold medal game this year, the girls were excited and ready to play."

Team BC struck first at 12:35 of the first period on a goal by Keeley O'Neill (New Westminster) off a feed from Madison Obrovac (New Westminster). Over two minutes later on a fast break, Bianca Santucci (Coquitlam) hit Megan Kinna (Ridge Meadows) streaking up the floor to put her in the clear. Kinna made no mistake and buried it behind the Ontario to take an early 2-0 lead.

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Team Ontario replied back a minute later on a goal by Jessica Digirolamo to cut the lead to one. Both teams raced back and forth to get the ever-important next goal, but with under four minutes left in the first, Ontario's Melanie Camacho took a feed from Katy DeSnoo to score and bring the score even at 2-2. The period ended with the teams knotted at two.

"We talked about not getting too high or too low," preached Stroup. "I let them know before the game that we'd get our goals and they would get theirs it's a game of runs. We stuck to our game plan and if we concentrated on the process -- more loose balls, more shots, and more face-off wins -- the end result would be gold." The second frame started just as the first with great goaltending and tight defense. Both teams experienced high percentage chances, but couldn't tickle the twine as Team BC goalie, Bianca Ballarin, and Ontario's Lauren Young both made timely saves and denied shooters at both ends.

With BC's Mieke Stobbart (Coquitlam) in the penalty box, Nadine Stewart (New Westminster) broke up an Ontario pass deep in the BC end and sent Katie Browning (New Westminster) on a break. Browning fended off an Ontario defender and scored shorthanded to put BC out in front midway through the period. At the 3:11 mark, Elle Hamilton (Juan de Fuca) intercepted a pass in the BC zone, then out raced the Ontario defenders down the floor, and made no mistake scoring on a breakaway to restore Team BC's two goal lead to end the second up 4-2.

Team BC continued their dominance on defense with stingy goaltending by Ballarin in the third, until the 6:19 mark when Ontario's Jessica Digirolamo scored her second of the game to make it a one goal game. Team Ontario seemed poised to make a valiant comeback as they continually pushed the ball inside the BC zone only to be repeatedly pushed back by a stubborn defensive corp. It was apparent Team BC was not going to be denied victory as they hung on to defeat Ontario 4-3 and win BC's first Female Bantam Box Lacrosse gold medal. Game MVP's were BC's Keeley O'Neill and Ontario goaltender Lauren Young.

"It feels way better to win gold," said Stroup. "I am so proud and happy for the girls, they did everything we asked of them -- they trained and worked very hard and they came ready to play every game. This year the girls were rewarded with a better result. It was truly a great team effort!"

The Team BC Female Midget team also met Team Ontario for the Midget gold medal. These two teams met earlier in the round robin with BC winning both, 7-0 and 2-1 respectively. Team BC earned a bye into the finals with a perfect record of 6 wins and zero losses. Other round robin scores were: BC 17 Nova Scotia 1, BC 3 Alberta 2, BC 20 Nova Scotia 2 and BC 10 Alberta 1. With a flawless record and a bye into the final, it was no time to be overconfident.

"We sort of felt that the first six games were just practice for the seventh and that Ontario was going to show some different looks, so I don't feel that we got too over confident, stated head coach Pat Coyle."

Kaitlyn Yan (Burnaby) started Team BC off on the right foot scoring at the 6:29 mark of the first assisted by Amie Morrison (Burnaby). Squwey Gottfriedsen (Kamloops) netted Team BC's second goal to take a 2-0 lead with helpers from Salena Lasota (Campbell River) and Billy McLaughlin (Port Coquitlam).

Marlo Bellamy (Ridge Meadows) opened the scoring in the second at 11:06, assisted by Courtney Kearnes (New Westminster) and Jenna Chernoff (New Westminster). BC would take a commanding four goal lead by Chernoff late in the period only to be answered by Ontario's Jamie Van Gozen with over a minute remaining. The period ended 4-1 for BC.

Ontario came out hard in the third frame trying to close the gap, but BC kept them off the board until there were only 52 clicks left when Jocelyne Lemay notched an unassisted goal to close within two. Team Ontario pulled their goalie but it was a matter of too little too late as BC went on to win their first Female Midget National title 4-2. Game MVP's were BC's Selena Lasota and Ontario's Emily Gillingham.

"I think our game plan was to outwork them in every area of the floor," mentioned Coyle. "We wanted to keep

them out of our middle and to impose our will in their end. We wanted to take the ball and value each possession. Basically, make them work for everything they got."

"I'm so proud of our girls," said Coyle. "They did everything that Jason [Bishop] and I asked of them and more and we were both amazed by how quick their learning curve was. I'm glad we won too because first and foremost I'm a competitor, but also to make a statement of how good the lacrosse is in BC."

One irony of hosting the 2012 Female Box Lacrosse Nationals in Victoria was that there is currently no all-female box lacrosse developed at a minor lacrosse association in the Greater Victoria area. Female athletes interested in playing box lacrosse compete on boy's teams, but at a certain age or skill level, many tend to leave the indoor game or play women's field lacrosse. This traditionally strong women's field lacrosse market may be poised for growth of the indoor game with the awareness of the nationals and the successes of the Team BC female teams.

"The skill level was extremely high, and the level of play outstanding," commented BCLA VP Performance Programs Ron McQuarrie. "Many knowledgeable lacrosse people in Victoria saw girl's box lacrosse for the first time. The comments were unanimous - we need to see a girl's box lacrosse league in Victoria, and on the Island. The performances at the nationals should go a long way to helping get this done."

"It was great to see the very high quality of coaching on both squads," noted McQuarrie. "Both Dan Stroup and Pat Coyle are to be congratulated for the development and preparation of their teams. It is also obvious that Female Box Chair, Shawn House, has done a great job in developing the girl's league."

These first two golden victories were sweet after the bitter losses to both Team Ontario Bantams and Midgets just one short year ago. It is best not to dwell on the past, but learn from the past, and live for today. The 2013 Female Box Lacrosse Nationals are slated for Halifax, Nova Scotia and BC will be there to defend their titles!



Female Team BC
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