

## **A Finals - Te Kura o Te Koutu Girls's and Aquinas College Boys claim first ever 'A' Secondary Schools National Championships**

The 2024 Girl's 'A' Secondary Schools National Champions, and the first holders of the Ngaire Lee Cup, are Te Kura o Te Koutu. The Rotorua school claimed the title in its first ever appearance in a Nationals Grand Final after they beat Aquinas College 75-61.

Waiheke Kohunui led the way for Te Kura o Te Koutu (TKO) with 30 points and there were also strong performances from New Zealand U17 representative Waikimihia Douglas-Karauna (16 points and 14 rebounds), Marewa Waerea-Tamai (15 points) and Karly Kaio (10 points).

For Aquinas it was a third straight Grand Final appearance but unfortunately for the Tauranga school they had to settle for a third consecutive silver medal. Sophie Rogers scored a game high 34 points while sister Emma Rogers scored 10 and Isabella Gillard added 12 rebounds to 9 points

After Ngahirate Haumaha had opened the scoring Emma Rogers replied for Aquinas but a brace of baskets from diminutive guard Kohunui helped TKO to an 11-2 lead.

Despite a deep three from Sophie Rogers to conclude the scoring in the first spell the advantage lay with TKO with a 24-14 lead.

Eight points from Kohunui, mainly in transition, stretched the TKO lead to 35-18 three minutes into the second period.

Waerea-Tamai scored from an exquisite pass from Kohunui before a Sophie Rogers score took her tally into double figures.

Another Sophie Rogers three meant she led all scorers at the half with 18 points although 13 apiece from Waerea-Tamai and Kohunui carried TKO to a 43-32 half-time lead

Aquinas opened the second half with a 12-4 run and TKO head coach Moana Douglas needed a timeout.

Kaio responded with a pair of free-throws but when Sophie Rogers made back-to-back triples Aquinas had their first lead of the game (50-49).

Kohunui rounded out the third quarter scoring to wrestle back the lead for TKO.

That advantage was quickly increased to 63-56 and after more Kohunui points the difference was in double figures with five minutes to play.

With Haumaha converting from beyond the arc and Sophie Rogers fouling out the brave effort from Aquinas – they had trailed by 17 points in the first half - came to an end with TKO deserved 2024 champions.

**Aquinas College 61** – S Rogers 34, E Rogers 10, Gillard 9

**Te Kura o Te Koutu 75** - Kohunui 30, Douglas-Karauna 16, Waerea-Tamai 15, Karly Kaio 10

### 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> Play-off

**Stratford High School 64** – Zeta Barber 25, Camryn Austin 15, Mackenzie Caskey 8

**TKKM o Te Kura Kokiri 76** – Ihipea Nuku 25, Hineaorangi Eru 18, Hineraumihi Biel-Hodges 16, Pareawheawhe Biel 12

### Girls All-Star Five

Zeta Barber – Stratford High School

Sophie Rogers – Aquinas College

Hineraumihi Biel-Hodges – TKKM o Te Kura Kokiri

Waiheke Kohonui – Te Kura o Te Koutu

Waikimihia Douglas-Karauna - Te Kura o Te Koutu

**Foot Locker Defensive Player of the Tournament:** Emma Rogers – Aquinas College

**Tournament MVP** - Waikimihia Douglas-Karauna

*The Ngaire Lee Cup is presented to the championship winning Single A Girl's Secondary School National Champions.*

*Ngaire Lee Q.S.M is a player, administrator and referee with almost 70 years involvement in the game. She was a sports administrator and coach at Rotorua Girls High School for over 30 years and served as an administrator and coach for Rotorua Basketball Association until her retirement in 2019 aged 88.*

*Ngaire is a Life Member of both Rotorua Basketball Association and BBNZ and in 1991 received the Lance Cross Award for distinguished contribution to basketball. In 1996 she was awarded a Queen's Service Medal for services to the Community.*

The 2024 Boy's 'A' Secondary Schools National Champions, and first holders of the Api Hemi Cup, are Aquinas College who survived a stunning comeback from Ngā Taiātea Wharekura (NTW) before winning 88-87.

With CJ Flavell (36 points) and Ky-Mani Kaumoana (28 points and 15 rebounds) in outstanding form Aquinas appeared to be cruising to victory when they led 79-60 with 6:13 to play.

However NTW showed tremendous resolve and scoring ability to pile on 27 points in the final six minutes to come within a whisker of pulling off an unlikely win.

Mckinley Wood (19 points) and Komai Winikerei (16 points) were the drivers behind the resurgence although it was Kaydyn Tauroa that pulled NTW within a single point (86-85) with 4 seconds to play. Kaumoana powered his way to the hoop on the next play for

Aquinas and although Wood again reduced the margin to one point time was their enemy and Aquinas, victorious in a national final for the first time, had hung on.

At the outset it was Michael Wade that opened proceedings with a sideline three ahead of an even fast paced opening period that concluded with Aquinas 25-21 ahead – CJ Flavell scoring 10 points and Wood with 7 for NTW.

Harman and Winikerei tied the scores at 25 points apiece before Aquinas went on a 14-2 run to move out to a 39-27 advantage .

Taniora Peta and Tumanako Clarke put NTW back on the board although Flavell and Kaumoana kept the Aquinas lead in double figures (45-32) with three minutes left in the first half.

NTW had the better of those closing minutes highlighted by a smart dish from Wood and the finish from Peta – the Aquinas lead reduced to 49-41 at half-time and the good contingent of NTW supporters in good voice.

Makiri came up with a couple of athletic blocks in the opening exchanges of the second half to anchor a more aggressive defensive effort from NTW and when the hard working forward scored inside the Aquinas lead was only ten points which became seven after a Paekau And-1 play.

Aquinas found a response through Flavell and Luka Mahy to lead 69-55 with ten minutes to play.

A bunch of points from Flavell extended the Aquinas advantage to 79-60 with 7 minutes to play and from there the excitement around the NTW comeback mounted.

**Aquinas College 88** – Flavell 36, Kaumoana 28, Wade 9, Mahy 9

**Ngā Taiātea Wharekura 87** – Wood 19, Peta 16, Winikerei 16, Tauroa 13, Harman 9

### **3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> Play-off**

**Te Aroha College 77** – Baraka Maina 19, Manaya Heke 17, Vince Lenden 12, Calan Diprose 11

**Central Southland College 49** – Blake Howes Kollat 13, Xavier Glover 11, Jerome Tabang 11

### **Boy's All-Star Five**

Jahmal Tiki Hunia – Te Kura o Te Koutu

Waihoru Tauroa – Ngā Taiātea Wharekura

Komai Winikerei – Ngā Taiātea Wharekura

Ky-Mani Kaumoana – Aquinas College

CJ Flavell – Aquinas College

**Foot Locker Defensive Player of the Tournament:** Reuben Brooker – Hamilton Christian College

**Tournament MVP:** CJ Flavell – Aquinas College

*The Api Hemi Cup is presented to the championship winning Single A Boy's Secondary School National Champions.*

*Api Hemi was a stalwart of the Church College basketball programme for many years. In 1978 and 1979 he coached the A1 boys who won a silver medal and a national title before he started a highly successful coaching career with girls basketball.*

*In his first year Church College placed third at Secondary Schools Nationals. From then on Api, his wife and family led many successful campaigns which saw him become the all-time winningest coach in New Zealand Secondary Schools basketball history.*

*He coached Waikato representative teams that won national titles and carried on his coaching career as a mentor and friend to many other coaches in the Waikato and Porirua regions.*