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**BREAKING NEWS** Tour Finals – 15s: Skyline rules

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## TOUR FINALS – 16S: THIRD SET A CHARM FOR MADFROG BLUE

Posted by: LoneStarVB 39 mins ago in Club News and Results [Leave a comment](#)

Today we continue our recap of the Tour finals with a look at Madfrog's drive to the 16s title.



Madfrog's Alecia Talley (13) sets Jillian Duffin (24) on the way to the Tour championship.

It would be hard to convince anyone who walked away after the first set of any of their matches over the weekend that Madfrog Blue left Houston on Sunday afternoon as the 2014 Tour of Texas champions.

The Frogs did, indeed, capture their second straight title, but they definitely made it more difficult than it probably needed to be, dropping the first set in all three matches only to rebound in the second and third.

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That included losing set one of the championship match by a whopping 25-6 margin to arch rival Dallas Skyline Royal.

To be fair, Madfrog coach Pacifico Conanán has been juggling lineups almost all season due to injuries and illnesses.

"Going into this weekend I was actually very nervous and did not know how many healthy bodies I would have," Conanán said.

On Thursday, OH **Claire Embry** had pulled a groin muscle. On Friday, Conanán found out MB **Lauren Rodemers** would not be able to travel because of the flu. Then there were **Jillian Duffin**, who had just been released to play after missing a month due to ankle injury, and OH **Jamie Stivers**, who had just been released to play after suffering an abdominal muscle strain at the Dallas stop on the Tour.

The championship was the third meeting in a tournament finals in just over a month between the two, and a rematch of the finals at the Tour stop in Dallas.

Dallas Skyline had won two of the three meetings, and as he gathered his team around him, Conanán had a message for his players.

"If you want to be number one in Texas you're going to have to beat one of the best teams in the country," he told them.

Early on, however, it looked like Skyline was headed to its third win in four meetings between the two teams.



Brooke Gorman (4) had the Skyline attack clicking early.

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To say the least, the Frogs struggled with serve receive and Skyline took full advantage with **Shalom Ifeanyiichukwu** and **Catherine Balido** throwing up a big block, **Elizabeth Gilley** and Ifeanyiichukwu unloading on the attack while **Briana Tully** and **Brooke Gorman** picked up what few Madfrog shots got through to the back row.

“In my years of coaching I have never been beaten that bad,” Conanan said. “Needless to say I had to find a way to get them up and energize them.”

He did and, as they had done in each of their first two matches at the Tour finals, the Madfrogs turned things around in a big way.

With setters **Kendall Patterson** and **Alecia Talley** doing a great job of mixing up the attack, Stivers, Embry, Duffin and **Meryn Kennedy** began finding holes in the Skyline defense. Meanwhile, the back row duo of **Montana Watts** and **Megan Lohmiller** were digging everything. As a result, Madfrog took control early and held on to take the second set 25-21.

Set three was a Frogfest as Patterson, Stivers, Kennedy and **Megan Northcutt** set the pace on offense and Watts continued to shine on the back row.

MadFrog rolled 15-9 to claim the title and even the score with their North Texas rivals at two wins each.

“I have learned one thing about my team going into the Qualifier Season,” Conanan said. “This team does not give up. This team plays with lots of heart and passion, and I believe they can play with best teams on the national level.”

As we mentioned, the Frogs’ road to the finals had been just as wild.



Lonestar's Elizabeth Augustini (4) and Alexas Bass (8) were a force at the net early against Madfrog.

After a 24-26, 25-17, 15-6 comeback win over SA Magic in the quarterfinals, they faced another North Texas rival in Lonestar Elite in the semifinals.

And Lonestar promptly put a 25-18 thumping on Madfrog to get things started.

It was emerging super setter **Ashley Brown** picking apart the Madfrog defense as Lonestar, especially lanky **Sydney Riggs**, **Kimberly Cobb**, **Allison Bliss** and **Ashtyn Richey**, came out with guns blazing.

As they would do later against Skyline, however, Madfrog was a different team in the second and third sets.



Jamie Stivers (4) unloads against the Lonestar defense.

In the second, it was Stivers and Duffin unloading on a 10-0 run to break open an 8-8 tie. Then it was Embry coming up big down the stretch to fight back a late Lonestar rally. At 24-18, Talley sent a perfect set that Duffin buried to close out the 25-18 win, forcing the third set.

And it belonged to the Frogs.

Stivers, Embry and Northcutt had Madfrog up 6-1 before the parents had finished swapping sides. Kills by **Elizabeth Augustini** and Richey brought Lonestar to within four, but Duffin and the relentless Stivers were dominating down the stretch as Madfrog closed out the 15-7 win to earn a berth in the finals.

Skyline, meanwhile, had less trouble in its semifinal sweep of AVA.





AVA's Savannah Alcazar (40) drives a shot through the block of Skyline's Sarah Langs (3) and Elizabeth Stephens (22)

The teams traded points to get things started with **Erin Richburg, Sarah Langs, Megan Porter** and **Shelby Perlich** doing most of the damage for Skyline. Meanwhile **Kylie Jedlicka, Ashlynn Dunbar, Chloe Holden** and **Nayo Warnell** led the attack for AVA, which actually led 12-11.

But then Ifeanyichukwu, **Nadia Retoff** and Langs took over, leading Skyline on a strong finish to take the opening set 25-19.

The second set was more of the same, with Dunbar, Warnell and **Savannah Alcazar** giving AVA a slight edge midway through. Then it was Porter taking over, leading a 13-7 run that broke it open and sent Skyline into the finals.

AVA rebounded from its loss to Skyline to take down Lonestar Elite 13-25, 26-24, 15-8 for third.

AP Gazelle rebounded from a first round loss to AVA to take down TAV Black then survive a wild 29-27, 26-24 shootout with Houston Juniors Elite for fifth.

Knights National Royal, which just missed qualifying for Division 1 in Dallas, took care of business in Division 2 with wins over Willowbrook Red, Victory Elite, Excel National Gray and AVA Attack.

#### FINAL STANDINGS AND RESULTS

##### HOW THE TOP 10 FARED

- 1. Dallas Skyline Royal** — Fell to Madfrog Blue in the Tour finals after knocking off TAV Black and AVA Rox.
- 2. Madfrog Blue** — Claimed Tour title with wins over SA Magic, Loinestar Elite and Dallas Skyline Royal.

**3. LoneStar Elite** — Swept Houston Juniors Elite then fell in three to Madfrog Blue and AVA Rox to finish fourth on Tour.

**4. Houston Juniors Elite** — Went 1-2 on final stop of the Tour, beating SA Magic and falling to Lonestar Elite and AP Gazelle.

**5. Austin Performance Gazelle** — Strong showing at the Tour finals, finishing fifth with wins over Houston Juniors Elite and SA Magic. Loss to Lonestar Elite was only blemish on weekend.

**6. TAV Black** — Tough weekend, falling to Dallas Skyline Royal and AP Gazelle before knocking off TAV Black to finish seventh on the Tour.

**7. AVA Rox** — Heading back up the rankings after knocking off AP Gazelle and Lonestar Elite to finish third on Tour. Only loss came to Dallas Skyline Royal.

**8. Knights Royal** — Made the most of not making Division 1 for the Tour finals by taking down Willowbrook Red, Victory Elite, Excel National and AVA Attack to win Division 2.

**9. SA Magic** — Started weekend falling in three to eventual champion Madfrog Blue, then dropped three-setters to Houston Juniors Elite and TAV Black to finish eighth on the Tour.

**10. Austin Juniors Mizuno** — Rough weekend in Division 2, falling to Victory Elite, Willowbrook Red, and Excel. Only win came against Texas Image Ray.

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