

Aiken Girls Deliver Repeat National Interscholastic Championship Win

Girls High School Arena Polo Team from South Carolina Defeats Maryland for the National Title

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- High School teams from around North America competed in [arena polo](#) pre-lims and regional competitions for a spot at the National tournament.

On Sunday, March 27, in a rematch of the previous year's final, the 2022 Girls' National Interscholastic Championship featured defending champions Aiken Polo Club (Brianna Jordan, Robyn Leitner, Reagan Leitner, Summer

Kneece) going head-to-head against Maryland Polo Club (Jordan Peterson, Sierra Blevins, Rory Knox, Kylie Beard, Izzy Brockett) in the [United States Polo Association](#) (USPA) arena polo tournament in Brookshire, Texas. Two powerhouse teams, Maryland sought redemption from a

historic final loss where Aiken successfully unseated their bid of three consecutive titles to raise the club's first championship trophy.

“

It was amazing to be able to finish my last interscholastic game with my sister and such amazing friends. I'm so thankful for teammates that encouraged and worked for one another!”

Robyn Leitner

championship repeat 16-10.

With a revised team in place, Aiken was also facing the reality of losing high school seniors



2022 Girls' National Interscholastic Championship Winners_ Aiken Polo Club - Brianna Jordan, Robyn Leitner, Reagan Leitner, Summer Kneece. Pictured with Coach Tiger Kneece ©David Murrell

Emerging from a field of five competitive teams, Aiken dominated in their semifinal over Yale to secure a finalist position, while Maryland defeated Houston 14-10 to earn their tenth finals appearance. Displaying determination and urgency, Aiken got off to an early lead from Kneece and despite a push from Maryland, a six-goal run for Aiken in the final period, called a chukker in polo, sealed their

Reagan and Robyn Leitner after the championship final match. Playing with Kneece in Aiken Youth Polo for five years, the sisters had one last bid as a unified team to stamp their legacy on interscholastic polo.

Knowing this would be their final chance to lift the trophy as teammates, Aiken came out confidently on their home string, with high school junior Kneece scoring the first goal without hesitation. Maryland's Beard was quick to respond with back-to-back goals, from the field and penalty line to give Maryland a narrow edge. Aiken tied things up after a melee in front of the goal mouth and a Penalty 1 automatic goal. Eager to take back the lead, two more goals from Aiken doubled up the score 4-2 moving into the second chukker.

Kneece wasted no time in the second chukker, this time riding Texas A&M (College Station, Texas) ponies, who were serving as Maryland's string for the weekend. After three consecutive goals from Kneece, Maryland's Blevins and Peterson focused on defense, thwarting Kneece long enough to allow space for two Maryland goals. Ending the first half, Aiken's Brianna Jordan sunk her first goal of the game, taking the ball coast-to-coast to end the chukker in favor of Aiken 8-4.

Taking time to reflect on Aiken's first half strengths, Reagan Leitner expressed, "Maryland is very strong and talented. We knew going into it that the girls on this team were aggressive players that could ride well. We wanted to start the first chukker hot and be ready to strike hard and fast, scoring as many goals as we could. We planned to play super open and control the pace of the game. [We knew] they would make their penalties, so we couldn't foul!" Re-invigorated after productive halftime strategizing, Maryland came into the third chukker firing on all cylinders. Peterson started things off beautifully with the first two-pointer of the day to



Aiken Polo Club's Summer Kneece looks towards goal with Maryland Polo Club's Kylie Beard in pursuit
©David Murrell



Aiken Polo Club's Robyn Leitner carries the ball ahead of Maryland's Kylie Beard ©David Murrell

chip away at the four-goal deficit. Tying the game once again, Beard followed suit by capitalizing on back-to-back penalty conversions. Aiken sprang back into action with Robyn Leitner sinking a Penalty 2, while Jordan added her second from the field to end the chukker ahead 10-8.

Prepared for the final push to the finish line, Coach Tiger Kneece gave daughter Summer and the Leitner sisters invaluable advice, "This is what you guys have worked for. You know you have it in you, now go get it done and enjoy this moment." Hungry to defend their title, Aiken tapped into an offensive flow, reaching another level to outscore their opponents 6-2, with all Aiken players contributing.

Maryland's Beard started off the chukker with a penalty conversion to come within one, but Kneece knocked in the second two-pointer of the day, to start off a six-goal Aiken streak. Peterson attempted to re-energize the Maryland effort with a final field goal, but as the clock wound down, Aiken's powerful scoring cemented the win with a decisive 16-10 victory.

Contributing nine of her team's 16 total goals, Kneece reflected on her team's triumphant USPA arena polo victory, "I feel that my whole team and I played very well through the whole game but the last chukker was definitely our best." Kneece continued, "it was the last chukker I had with Reagan [Leitner] and Robyn [Leitner], so we went out there and gave it everything we had. Texas A&M also provided the amazing horses that we had for the fourth chukker."

Maryland's Beard also noted her appreciation sharing, "We got the opportunity of a lifetime being able to play amazing horses and hang out with people that have the passion and love for the sport that we have." A team full of up-and-coming players, don't be surprised if you see Maryland again next year vying for the championship in arena polo.

All-Stars in the Girls' National Interscholastic Championship included, Elise Pardue (Eldorado Polo Club), Summer Kneece (Aiken Polo Club), Kylie Beard (Maryland Polo Club), and Lillian Lequerica (Houston Polo Club). The Sportsmanship Award - Sierra Blevins (Maryland Polo Club). Elise Pardue - Horsemanship Award.

San Antonio Polo Club was awarded Best Playing String, and their mare Canela was also presented with Best Playing Pony honors.

Game video available on [Global Polo TV](#).

About the United States Polo Association®

The United States Polo Association was organized and exists for the purposes of promoting the game of polo, coordinating the activities of its Member Clubs and Registered Players, arranging and supervising polo tournaments, competitions and games, and providing rules, handicaps, and conditions for those tournaments, competitions, and games including the safety and welfare of participants and mounts. Founded in 1890, the USPA is the national governing body for the sport of polo. The USPA is currently comprised of more than 200 member clubs with thousands of individual members and oversees 40 national tournaments.

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