

Aztec save best for final

By ALAN APTED

Aztec Premiers are the champions of the Counties Manukau Regional Netball League.

They dethroned defending champions the Papatoetoe Rangers 39-34 in tightly contested final at Strathallan College last Sunday.

The win reverses the 50-43 loss Aztec suffered to Rangers in the final round of the minor premier-ship eight days earlier.

Coach Winnie Hauraki says her team saved their best for last.

"It was by far the best game they played all season," she says.

"We looked closely at how we defended against them in the previous match and came to the decision that we had to change the way we defended against their wing attack Jean Waaka and goal shoot Caitlin Reidstra.

"It was a matter of shutting down their space early and either forcing them into mistakes or directing their passes to where we wanted them to go.

"We knew we had to frustrate them and we did.

"The girls came off at the end of each quarter soaking," Hauraki says.

"But they'd jump back on court and pick up where they left off.

"It was a real courageous performance. They needed great internal strength to win that one."

Ashleigh Timoko had an outstanding final at goal attack.

Hauraki had used Timoko in defence for most of the season but



Champions: Aztec Premiers winners of the Counties Manukau Regional Netball League.

was forced to play her in attack when the experienced Marcia Bennett couldn't take the court because of a dislocated knee.

Hauraki says the goal now is to improve their standing in the Super 12 netball tournament next March.

"We were fourth in the first year of the Super12 but finished ninth this year," she says.

"We're disappointed with that result and are determined to do better."

Aztec, Rangers and Mellons Bay

will represent Counties Manukau in the Super 12, the tournament which features the three best teams from Counties Manukau, Auckland-Waitakere, North and Waikato.

Papatoetoe Rangers 2 beat Mellons Bay 49-42 in the playoff for

RESULTS

Division one: Aztec Premiers 39 Papatoetoe Rangers 1 34 (final); Papatoetoe Rangers 2 49 Mellons Bays 42 (3rd/4th); Timbertown Shelly Park 64 H&W United 39 (5th/6th).
Final standings: Aztec Premiers, Papatoetoe Rangers 1, Papatoetoe Rangers 2, Mellons Bay, Timbertown Shelly Park, H&W United.
Division two: Bombay 39 Manurewa Rugby 33 (final); Pumaz 1 60 Tuakau 52 (3rd/4th); Aztec 2 bt Pumaz 2 by walkover. Final standings: Bombay, Manurewa Rugby, Pumaz 1, Tuakau, Aztec 2, Pumaz 2.

third and fourth but can't play in the Super12 because the rules dictate that only one team per club is permitted to enter.

Rangers 2, a side brimming with teenagers, were the surprise package of this year's league.

They were the best team in division two after round one and elevated to the premier ranks for round two of the championship.

Bombay won the division two crown. They beat Manurewa Rugby 39-33 in the final.

The Aztec Premiers are Ashleigh Timoko, Ashleigh Green, Dannielle Steffany, Eloise Blackwell, Italia Tipelu, Joanne Kimitaunga, Leonie Mateo, Marcia Bennett, Ruth Hei Hei, Shanna Coetzee, Sinapi Latapu, Tabitha Ma'u, coaches Winnie Hauraki/Lianne Inkster, manager Briar Martindale, primary care Karen Otene and statistician Arihia Aubrey.