

This is the first encounter between the two newly signed teams for this Season. Zabbar St. Patrick were being coached by Coach Chris Gatt and Captained by Caroline Bugeja while Balzan Flyers were being coached and captained by Coach Dalton Caurana and Claudette Mifsud, respectively.

Kimberly Grech started the game with a long service, to which Balzan Flyers players found it difficult to put over. After long rally, the players in blue equalized the score but in the next rally, Zabbar St Patrick took the lead again. Quick was the reply from the players in blue to equalize the score. For the initial points of the game, it appeared that the game was going to be very well fought, as both teams were fighting for each ball and the points shifted from one side to another. At 4-4 Balzan Flyers managed to take the lead and the gap between the two teams quickly became 4 points. With the score being 8-4 in favour of the ladies in blue, Coach Gatt requested this first time out of the set to regroup his players. After the time out, Zabbar players did not manage to stop the momentum and after another long rally the gap was increased with 2 more points. When the gap reached 7 points, Balzan Flyers players gave the opportunity to Zabbar St. Patrick to start reducing the gap. Unfortunately, Zabbar players did not managed to clinch many points from their opponents. Zabbar players with the spikes by Kimberly Grech and Stephanie Grech reduced the gap to 4 points. From the stands, it looked that initial moment of Balzan was fading and on the other hand Zabbar were gaining confidence in court. Now, the gap was reduced to 3 points between both teams. Zabbar were clinching points with the services of Daniela Magro and the spikes of Stephanie Grech. A tip by Rachel Caruana interrupting the climb of the players from Zabbar. A swing of points from one side to another started but when it looked that Balzan Flyers were going to start increased the gap between the teams, Captain Bugeja (Zabbar St. Patrick) surprised her opponents with an intelligent tip. Still suffering from the shock of the previous point, Balzan Flyers lost another point to the spike of Stephanie Grech. A moment of distraction from Zabbar players caused them 2 consecutive points and at 15-19 under Coach Gatt requested the 2<sup>nd</sup> time out. Although after the time out there was a long rally, Balzan Flyers managed to come on top. Kimberly Grech managed to interrupt the momentum of Balzan Flyers with a tip behind the block. It did not pass much time for Balzan Flyers to regain possession of the ball. This was done by a spike by Kelly Fenech. A miscommunication error in the Zabbarian front gave more advantage to Balzan Flyers and but the latter quickly returned the favour. In the last part of the set, the points were shifting again from side to another and in the end Balzan Flyers prevailed at 25-20.

The first rally of the second set was balanced and long but it was Balzan Flyers who won the rally. Zabbar players quickly equalized the score and took the lead to two points. Some points started to shift from one side to another, and Balzan Flyers managed to equalize the score at 5-5. Eventually, the latter took the lead in the rally after. Zabbar players gained a point to equalize the score. Both teams were trying to dictate their pace but a spike from Sara Bonnici and 2 services by Kelly Fenech allowed the players in the blue to gain a 4 point lead at 10-6. A spike along the line by Kimberly Grech stopped the momentum of her opponents. Stephanie Grech aced another point for the ladies in black. At 1 point difference between the two teams, Stephanie Grech aced another service to the make the score equal. Players from Balzan lost their focus and allowed Zabbar St. Patrick to take the lead. The Zabbar ones did not conserve the lead and allowed Balzan players to equalize and eventually take the lead. It was now the time for Zabbar players to equalize the score and eventually take the lead. A tip by Kimberly Grech allowed her team to settle the score with two point difference in the team's favour. Both teams were showing signs of lack of concentration and were giving away points like a special offer. When the score was 16-16, it was Zabbar who again took the lead but a spike from position 4, but Kelly Fenech again

equalize the score. After some substitutions from both sides, the score read 20-18 in favour of the players in black and here Zabbar gained another point. It was Coach Caruana's turn to request a time out at 18-21. Stephanie Grech's service was lost and the ladies in blue had the opportunity to reduce the gap, but a tip by Caroline Bugeja surprised the opponents. A miscommunication between the Zabbar players allowed Caruana's players to reduce the gap to 1 point. The pressure was being felt on the players in black and after Balzan Flyers managed to equalize the score, Coach Gatt requested a second time out at 22-22. The time out was ineffective as Claudette Mifsud kept her focus and aced 2 services in a row. Zabbar St. Patrick regained the right to serve and the score was 24-23 in favour of Balzan. A long rally was initiated but in the end of the rally Balzan Flyers emerged victorious and the final set score 25-23.

With 2 sets under, Zabbar started the set quickly by taking a 2 point lead over their opponents. The Balzan players gained one point but Zabbar quickly replied. Points were shifting from both sides and at 4-4, Balzan Flyers took the lead. Stephanie Grech spiked a diagonal ball to equalize the score. After taking the lead, Balzan Flyers player Rachel Caruana committed a service fault to allow her opponents to equalize the score. With the services of Stephanie Grech and the spikes of Kimberly Grech, Zabbar found themselves with a 2 point lead. It was a spike by Kelly Fenech to reduce the gap. After a long rally and a tip by Claudia Buhagiar and the score was now 8-8. At this point Coach Gatt had to request the first time out of the set. After the time out, the team of Dalton Caurana kept the service. Kelly Fenech kept her focus and aced 2 services in a row. Zabbar players seemed to have a moment of distraction allowed the ladies in blue to have a 4 point gap. Kelly Fenech missed widely the service and after a long rally Balzan Flyers prevailed and regained the right to serve. After another long rally, it was the turn of Zabbar's turn to prevail. Zabbar players were looking drained, as these were giving points in favour to their opponents in fact with the at 15-10 Coach Gatt called for the second time out. Balzan Flyers increased the gap to 19-11 in their favour. Zabbar players were completely lost during this part of the set and the Balzan players were clinching points after points. The rhythm of the game started to change in favour of the Zabbar players as these gained 2 points consecutively. The Balzan players clinched more points in their march for the 25<sup>th</sup> point. Some points shifted from one side to another but finally Balzan Flyers emerged victorious at 25-17.

The final Score Zabbar St. Patrick vs Balzan Flyers :- 0 – 3 (20 – 25 ; 23 – 25 17-25)

Referee of the match was Marvic Micallef.

