

Women's Hockey – FIH Champion's Challenge – Day 1, Matches 1 and 2

USA beat Spain, but South Africa and Ireland draw


Sunday was the opening day of the International Hockey Federation (FIH) Women's Champion's Challenge in Glasgow. Running alongside the men's tournament, eight teams are involved – Scotland, Ireland, USA, Spain, South Africa, Belgium, India and South Korea and they are playing in two pools of four teams. The prize for the winners is a place at the top table competition – The Women's FIH Champions Trophy in 2015.



The first match played was between USA and Spain and the USA started much the better with an early drive into the Spanish 25. Spain came back at them, but couldn't break down the USA defence, which held fairly firm for the entire match. The first goal came five minutes before the break from No 16, Katie O'Donnell. O'Donnell fought her way into the 'D' and struck a reverse stick shot past the Spanish 'keeper, Maria Lopez de Eguilaz Zubiria, for the opener. The second half was much of the same, with USA pressing and Spain defending. The breakthrough came in the 47th minute. Despite two fine saves by the Spanish 'keeper from penalty corners, a shot from open play found its way into the net for the second goal. Another open play goal was scored by Melissa Gonzales less than ten minutes later to give USA a 3-0 lead. The final ten minutes of the match were dominated by Spain, as the USA settled back to defend their lead, and in the 62nd minute, the reward came with penalty corner goal which was scored by Maria Gomez to leave the final score 3-1 to the USA.



South Africa v Ireland was the second match on and early pressure from South Africa caught Ireland on the back foot and 11 minutes in, No 30,

Sulette Damons had an easy tap in following a fine attacking run through the centre of the Irish defence. They were nearly on the score board again after another six minutes of play, but No 19, Ayeisha McFerran, in the Irish goal forced the play wide and the sliding Celia Evans saw the ball pass agonisingly past the post. Ireland then started to get the measure of the South African attack, and managed to force RSA's 'keeper into a fine, late save to ensure the half finished finished with that 1-0 lead to RSA. It was during the first half that Ireland's No 10, Shirley McCay was injured. Diving to block a shot, she collected the  attackers follow through full in the face. From the sidelines it looked a very serious injury, and the player was taken from the field to be treated as the officials cleaned up the spilt blood from the pitch. The second half started much more brightly for Ireland and they exerted a great deal of pressure on the South African goal. Their reward came in the 44th minute when Anna O'Flanagan fired home a cross field pass from Naomi Carroll to draw the sides level. A few minutes later, however, South Africa were back on the score sheets, and back in the lead, with a goal from a crossed ball, deflected into the net by Dirkie Chamberlain. Ten minutes later, the scores were level again as another Irish attack was presented with a penalty corner, which No 18, Audrey O'Flynn converted for the equaliser. Despite the rest of the match being a to-and-fro affair, neither team could secure a clear-cut chance at goal and the match finished 2-2.

Images from the matches will be available [here...](#) sometime. (Eight matches over three days = lots of photos. Bear with us)