

Women's Hockey – FIH Champion's Challenge – Day 1, Matches 3 and 4

Scotland lose out to Belgium and, favourites, South Korea beat India into submission



The stands had been gradually filling up during the day and, for 'The Big One' – or, at least, 'The Most Anticipated One' – they were almost full. Scotland v Belgium was next up on the pitch and hopes were high. However, Belgium had most of the early play, and forced a fine penalty corner save out of the defence early on. But it was the Scots who were first off the mark with a well worked goal. The ball was carried along the baseline and passed to Ali Bell. With her back to goal, the No 5 turned quickly on the ball and lashed the close-range shot past the Belgian 'keeper for the first goal of the game. Belgium came back strongly and piled on the pressure.

They hit the back of the goal from a late penalty corner, but the umpires decreed the shot had gone too high and the goal was disallowed. That changed five minutes into the second half as another penalty corner for Belgium was put away by No 9, Liesolette van Lindt, who took advantage of Scottish 'keeper, Nicky Cochrane's 'habit' of going to ground early. Van Lindt then only had to deflect the initial strike over the sprawling Cochrane for the equaliser. The next 20 or so minutes of play saw no further scoring, but it was still end to end stuff, Scotland managing to exert a bit more pressure on the Belgian side than they had earlier in the game.

But it was the visiting side who scored the next goal. Picking the ball up on halfway, Barbara Nelen proceeded to evade all

the defending players before slamming a reverse stick shot past Cochrane for the lead. They then lost a player to a yellow, which gave Scotland the edge and the final ten minutes saw a sustained assault on the Belgian goal. Two 'nearlies' went a-begging as first no 13, Ailsa Wylie just slid past a loose ball in front of goal and then captain, Linda Clement denied by a fine save. Two other chances were kept out by a magical performance from the Belgian 'keeper to give them the match 2-1. Another injured player was forced off the field during this match as the Scottish was struck in the face by the ball. She did manage to make her own way to the sidelines – no footballer, then – but wasn't able to continue.



And then it was time for the fourth and final match on a day of fantastic play. Unfortunately, the crowd had seen the game they came to see and gradually drifted off and, as a result, missed a dominant display by the predicted winners of the tournament, South Korea, as well as some late afternoon sunshine. Memories of the Olympic Football flag debacle were swept aside as the opening went off well and the match commenced. And it commenced with a bang. India had virtually no answer to the Korean's powerful style of hockey.

Cross after cross was rained in on the Indian goal from all angles and it was only the athletic keeper and, it has to be said, the marginal lack of ability by the Korean's to latch onto to the fierce hits that kept the match scoreless. In fact, such was the quality of the hitting that many men's teams would have struggled to cope. However, it was India who took the early lead with a well struck shot from the edge of the area by Vandana Katariya. Two minutes later, parity was restored as No 10, Park Mi Hyun, took advantage of a tangle between 'keeper and defender to slot the ball home for the equaliser. And so the assault continued. India were struggling to cope, and two penalty corners in quick succession were

rewarded as No 11, Kim Ok Ju converted the second attempt. The Indian 'keeper, Savita Savita was played and absolute blinder, but pressure eventually told in the 28th minute and South Korea found the net again from No 32, Cheon Eun Bi.

This was when the very poorly dealt with injury to Sushila Pukhrambam happened and details can be read in the [Weekly Sports round-up](#), so won't be repeated here. The second half was, again, an assault on the senses as attack after attack was fired in on the Indian goal but, somehow they were mostly kept out. A fourth goal was scored seven minutes in by Lee Young Sil, but how another four or five didn't get chalked up is testament to the Indian defence, especially substitute goalie, Yogita Bali. The continual hammering eventually told, but it told on Korea as India managed to break away in the final 10 minutes and were awarded with a second goal, this one from Poonam Rani, but it was always going to be a South Korean victory and the match ended with the score 4-2.

The hockey continues at the National Hockey centre all week with the Men's tournament coming to a conclusion today (Monday) and the women going on until Sunday, with rest days on Tuesday and Friday. Hopefully, The Edinburgh Reporter can get back 'on-site' for another couple of days to keep abreast with proceedings.

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