


# Women's Hockey – FIH Champion's Challenge, Semi- finals 3 and 4

*South Africa and USA make it through as Scotland fail in their quest for a top-four finish.*




The second two Semi-final matches were played in the evening as the wind seemed to bring the temperatures even further down. Advantage to Scotland? 'Maybe's Aye, maybe's naw...' as a famous footballer, allegedly, once said.

That question appeared to be answered within a minute of the push-back as South Africa stormed up the field and No 10, Shelley Russell, fired in a shot from the right of the 'D' which found its way past Amy Gibson in the Scottish goal and into the back of the net. It was a bad start for the Scots, but as the half progressed, they came more and more into the game, putting pressure on the South African defence and coming close a couple of times. Meanwhile, the South Africans began to lose their shape and were unable to make any concerted drives upfield. 1-0 up at the start of the second half, South Africa seemed to have got their act together and Russell (in post-match interview – right) was on the score sheet  again after three minutes of the restart, this time from a penalty corner. 2-0 down, Scotland held out the opposition, despite some fine attacking play, while getting a few drives going into the South African defence. With less than ten minutes to go, Scotland stepped up the pressure on the South African goal and their reward came in the 64<sup>th</sup> minute from a combination of Linda Clement and Emily McGuire. Clement threw herself at the ball in the 'D', but her strike went over the 'keeper and off the crossbar. McGuire was then first to react and was able to stick the ball in the back of the net for Scotland's goal. The Scots continued to force South Africa back as they were beginning to panic in desperation. But the clock, eventually, beat the Scots and the

match ended, 2-1, with great relief to the visitors and the third Semi-final place was decided. It was a huge disappointment to the Scottish women and to the, quite frankly, poor turnout in the stands to see the home side defeated by the Africans once again.



Final match on the day was the – given the relative performances – supposed walk-over game for the USA to just get through and progress. India, however, saw things differently and the match – played in front of  an even more dismal crowd (maybe 20-30) than the Scotland match – was an exciting, end-to-end game, where both sides came up with clear chances to take the lead. But, both defences, and some heroic ‘keeping, kept the honours even until the 59<sup>th</sup> minute. A penalty corner award to the USA was struck home by No 8, Rachel Dawson to give the American side the 1-0 lead. Or was it? Photographic ‘evidence’ from the match suggested that her strike was going wide, and that No 14, Katie Reinprecht, got her stick to the ball and deflected it into the net. However, on closer inspection, the ball had deflected off an Indian stick, into the roof of the net and USA then went on to win the match 1-0 and take the final place in Saturday’s Semi-final play-offs. The match did suffer from a bit of poor umpiring at one end, but given it was ‘even-handedly’ poor neither side suffered particularly.

The matches on Saturday start at 9:00am, and are as follows –

5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Scotland v South Korea

5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Belgium v India

SF 1 Ireland v South Africa

SF2 Spain v USA

Images from the matches can be viewed [here](#) over the next few days