

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

## *Ireland and USA make Final in Glasgow*



The afternoon matches on Saturday were reserved for the two Semi-finals to be played between South Africa and Ireland and USA and Spain. All four teams had played well to be here with Ireland, in particular, showing that sheer grit and determination can play a huge part. That's not to say that a great deal of skill also came into play. South Africa, as has been their habit, took the lead after eight minutes with a goal from No 31, Celia Evans, who latched onto a through ball from Marsha Cox to score the opening goal. Ireland then came back in the 16<sup>th</sup> minute with a goal from a Megan Frazer penalty corner. The first half was, initially, more with South Africa, but Ireland worked their way back in and neither team could claim dominance by the end of the half. Ireland, however, came out stronger in the second half and, with just over 10 minutes played, took advantage of a lapse of concentration in the African side's defence. No 24, Kathryn Mullen got round the defence and passed the ball from the baseline, into the ruck of players in front of goal where No 8, Nicola Evans pounced and struck her shot into the goal, past the static 'keeper for the lead. The lead they were to keep for the rest of the match and take, which the South African captain, Marsha Cox, acknowledged was, the well deserved win.



The second Semi-final was an all-together more one sided match, with the USA almost totally dominating possession and territory. Their attacks came from all angles and the penalty corner count was in excess of a dozen. The first goal came after 10 minutes when No 16, Katie O'Donnell, deflected a penalty corner strike into the area past the Spanish 'keeper.

The second came two minutes later, from open play, when No. 24, Kathleen Sharkey, got on the end of another fierce cross-goal ball for her goal. Third goal of the half was another open play goal, this one from No 10, Jill Witmer. Striking a reverse stick shot from the edge of the 'D', she saw the ball deflect off a defending stick and loop up and over the 'keeper, and into the net for the USA's third – and final goal of the game. In spite of making a better game of it in the second half, and scoring a penalty corner goal 15 minutes from time, the Spanish side had no answer to the USA's superior game play and the final score of 3-1 does not do justice to the USA's dominance in almost every area, apart from accuracy in front of goal, it seems.....

USA now play Ireland in the final, while Spain and South Africa play for 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> place in the tournament.

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