

MATCH REPORTS FROM THE FUTSAL NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS 2012

Submitted by Mitch Grima

Under 11 boys Grand Final

NSW Thunder 6 (Martin Fernandez 4, James Tsokos, Aaron Nissirios) NSW Lightning 4 (Tallon Zahra 2, Sungwon Kim, Rocco Chisari) There was a grand entrance for the Under 11 boys and girls to commence the final day of the FFA Futsal Nationals, and it was deservedly so. NSW put on two cracking Grand Finals with NSW Thunder taking out the titles in both the boys and girls finals. It was a tight encounter in the Under 11 boys match with both sides looking intent on attacking from the outset. It was NSW Lightning who took an early lead when Sungwon Kim's shot was deflected, leaving the Thunder goalkeeper helpless. The game then turned in Thunder's favour with two quick goals from Martin Fernandez and James Tsokos gifting the Sky Blue side with a 2-1 lead. Lightning were sure to not let their NSW counterparts slip away and they hit back with a routine back post pass finished off by Tallon Zahra. In an end-to-end encounter, the result looked too close to decide when Martin Fernandez tucked away his second goal of the match to give Thunder a 3-2 advantage. But just when his side looked down and out, NSW Lightning player Tallon Zahra rocketed his second goal into the top corner to send the match into extra time. But there was little more to cheer about for the Lightning as Martin Fernandez snared a hat trick and added another goal to help Thunder take out the Championship 6-4.

Under 11 girls Grand Final NSW

NSW Thunder 1 (3) (Stephanie Gordan) NSW Lightning 1 (1) (Monique Holder) In another all-NSW affair, it was the Thunder who prevailed to be crowned Under 11 girls national champions. The girls in blue looked dangerous from kick-off and Stephanie Gordan gave them an early lead with a solid shot from outside the D. The Thunder then took control of the match and only some brilliant reflexes from the Lightning goalkeeper kept the score line at 1-0. After the break, Thunder continued to pepper the opposition goal and were denied by the woodwork on two occasions. That spurred the Lightning into action and they hit back through remarkable talent Monique Holder who was crowned player of the match and player of the tournament. Neither side looked like giving up and both NSW goalkeepers held their own, taking the match into extra time. A dreaded penalty shootout was on the cards after scored remained locked at 1-1. Both keepers were in fine form but it was NSW Thunder who converted their chances and escaped 3-1 victors after penalties.

Under 12 boys Grand Final

NSW Thunder 2 (Justin Wilkin 2) Queensland 5 (Lachlan Weier, Jack Stankov, Fraser Williams 2, Jordan Tucker) Queensland took bragging rights from their Under 12 boys Grand Final clash with NSW Thunder in a dominant display. Thunder held much of the early possession but were unable to penetrate the opposition goal. The game's tempo lifted up a notch when Queensland number 7 Fraser Williams found a narrow gap to convert a powerful free kick. NSW then hit back through Justin Wilkin who finished off a well-rehearsed back post move. Both goalkeepers had a lot of work to do and Queensland earned a one-goal buffer at half time with a shot from close range. Queensland came out a different side in the second half with player of the match Fraser Williams grabbing a second and Joshua Nisbett wreaking havoc through the NSW defence to give the boys in maroon a 5-2 lead on their way to the national title.

Under 12 girls Grand Final

NSW Thunder 5 (Cassidy Chidgey 2, Princess Ibini-Isei, Brittney Hammond, Genevieve Tucker) NSW Lightning 3 (Georgia Manos, Dimity Antonis, Marissa Kassapakis) NSW Thunder grabbed its third title of the day with a hard fought win over fellow NSW side Lightning. A relentless period of attack helped the

Thunder race out to an early 3-0 lead thanks to goals from Princess Ibini-Isej, Cassidy Chidgey and Britney Hammond. A half-time pep talk worked wonders for Lightning who clawed two goals back to move within one goal of Thunder. Both sides proved worthy of a position in the final and it seemed Lightning were able to match anything Thunder could throw at them. Thunder restored a two-goal lead once more, which was cutback yet again to provide a tense final period. But the Thunder proved too strong for Lightning as they rounded off the match 5-3.

Under 13 boys Grand Final

NSW Thunder 5 (Jordan Pyne 2, Mario Shabow 2, Scott Armstrong) ACT Cobras 4 (David Carder 2, Christopher Kazolis, Tully Keegan) NSW Thunder and ACT Cobras played out an enthralling match in the Under 13 boys Grand Final. The lead changed four times throughout the forty minutes before Thunder were crowned champions. ACT took an early lead through Grant Barlow who pounced on a rebound off the NSW 'keeper. Mario Shabow then equalised for the Thunder, polishing off a solid passage of passing. It was then the ACT's turn to find the net and they did it in style. Christopher Kazolis belted a free kick into the top corner to give the Cobras a 2-1 lead. A crafty one-two pass helped Thunder restore parity right on half time through Scott Armstrong. The second half provided just as much excitement as the first with the crowd adding to the atmosphere. NSW found a breakthrough as Mario Shabow slotted home his second goal of the match. That goal seemed to spur the Cobras into action and they found momentum through David Carder who netted two goals in quick succession to give the ACT boys a 4-3 lead. But Thunder didn't panic and found a way through the Cobras defence with Jordan Pyne firing a low shot into the back of the net. Just as the match looked destined for extra time, Jordan Pyne cleaned up the scraps on the goal line to earn his hat trick and give NSW Thunder the national title.

Under 13 girls Grand Final

NSW Thunder 1 (Shannon Wilcox) ACT Cobras 0 There was little to separate NSW Thunder and Victoria in the Under 13 girls Grand Final and the score line is a rightful indication of the battle these two sides played out. Both keepers were tested throughout the first half and stood tall against the barrage of attacks. Thunder and Victoria looked frustrated up front and it wasn't until the second half that Thunder were able to grab an advantage through Shannon Wilcox. The well-taken goal proved to be enough to seal the game for NSW as they held off a series of late Victorian attacks to claim the championship.

Under 14 boys Grand Final

NSW Thunder 5 (Alusine Fofanah 3, Michael Loupis, Martin Lo) ACT Cobras 2 (Raed Abdu, Brady Nixon) NSW Thunder Under 14 boys could have been forgiven for feeling a sense of déjà vu when they heard the full time whistle go in their clash with the ACT Cobras. It was exactly 12 months since their coach and most of the team claimed the national title as the Under 13 boys and their dominance in this year's final showed why they have gone back-to-back. It was the Cobras who took the lead early on and they looked to put up a valiant fight. With the ball moving fluently from end to end, Thunder played simple at the back and waited for a breakthrough. That came through man of the match Alusine Fofanah who levelled things at 1-1 before Martin Lo added a second for NSW right on half time. ACT came out with all guns blazing in the second half and looked promising in attack until Alusine Fofanah buried the match with two quick top class strikes. Michael Loupis made it 5-1 for Thunder before Cobras grabbed a late consolation through Brady Nixon.

Under 14 girls Grand Final

NSW Lightning 2 (Own goal, Sarah Philipson) Victoria 4 (Emma Heckenberg 2, Daniela Gudelj, Madeline Stockdale) Victoria's Under 14 girls side look to avenge the earlier defeat of their Under 13 compatriots and there was an obvious focus on striking early. The Victorians piled on the pressure and were justly

rewarded with a spectacular 3-0 lead. A brace from Emma Heckenberg and a third from Madeline Stockdale gave the Victorians some room to breathe at the half time break. NSW returned from the break with a new attitude and were denied by the opposition goalkeeper on a number of occasions before they received a fortunate break thanks to a Victorian own goal. As the game looked to be slipping away from the Thunder, Sarah Philipson gave the NSW side some hope, cutting the deficit to 3-2. The goal provided some tense moments in the dying stages but Victoria's Daniela Gudelj buried the match with a spectacular turn and volley. Victoria were crowned national champions with the match ending 4-2.

Under 15 girls Grand Final

NSW Thunder 3 (Lisa Meduri, Zoe Zaczek, Amy Dahdah) NSW Lightning 4 (Samantha Scarlato, Georgia Busuttill, Georgia Klapos 2) NSW Thunder and NSW Lightning resumed their rivalry in the Under 15 girls Grand Final in a seesawing affair. Possession was more crucial than ever before and it both sides proved capable of making chances every time they got the ball. To the surprise of many, NSW Lightning grabbed an early two-goal lead. Georgia Klapos turned in a rebound for the opener before Most Valuable Player Samantha Scarlato added a second for Lightning. Thunder refused to surrender and a deft chip from Lisa Meduri swung momentum in their favour. A cracking shot from Zoe Zaczek allowed Thunder to equalise before half time. But before the whistle sounded for the break, Lightning earned a 3-2 advantage thanks to a well-placed finish from Georgia Busuttill. The second half provided a series of highlights and when Amy Dahdah added Thunder's third, the championship was well and truly up for grabs. But a resounding Georgia Klapos finish from the penalty spot sealed the victory for Lightning.

Under 15 boys Grand Final

NSW Thunder 3 (Robert Perre 3) ACT Cobras 1 (Sean O'Neill) It took three of the best for NSW Thunder to record its seventh victory of the day as the Under 15 boys proved their mettle against the ACT Cobras to be crowned national champions. The Cobras were unable to record a win from their third match of the day but they made sure they had Thunder in their sights for the whole game. NSW front man Robert Perre took advantage of some sloppy play near the ACT goalmouth to hand his side an early 1-0 lead. But less than a minute later, the Cobras stamped their intentions with some solid build-up play finished off by Sean O'Neill to even the ledger. NSW kept to their own style, which proved effective soon after as Robert Perre netted his second goal of the match with a crafty shot through the ACT goalkeeper's legs. ACT gritted their teeth and kept in the encounter until Perre completed his hat trick in the second half to give NSW an unassailable lead.