



Reigning champions up and running

The NSW Thunder Men's Open team got the defence of their FFA Futsal National Championship crown off to a winning start in Canberra on Day One of the tournament with a 2-1 victory over the ACT Cobras.

Strikes from Chris Zeballos and Daniel Martinez gave the Thunder a 2-0 cushion at the half-time interval and despite Marcel Munoz reducing the arrears in the second half the Thunder were comfortable winners.

It was a particularly impressive result considering it came against the team expected to be their most serious challenge to retaining the championship won in such exhilarating fashion last year. Plenty of the Thunder's line-up enjoyed excellent matches, particularly the slightly built, elusive running Andres Gomez and key playmaker Adrian Vizzari, giving the rest of the competition plenty to think about for the rest of the week's fixtures.

By contrast the ACT Colts couldn't have asked for a better opening despatching South Australia 3-1 in a one sided clash. Goals from Maxime Jacquin, Victor Yanes and Marcin Zygmunt put Pat McCann's team in complete control before a late Jarrod Noel consolation for the South Australians.

NSW Lightning got off to a winning start in an enthralling match coming out on top in a five goal thriller with Northern NSW Hunter. A superb goal from Daniel Fulton decided the end-to-end match after the sides had been deadlocked at 2-2 at half-time.

But the best was left for last in the men's competition as Victoria and Southern NSW fought out a rollicking match, the last of the evening. After forty pulsating minutes the teams could not be separated and the crowd were left on the edge of their seats as the clash finished 3-3. Oner Simsek grabbed a brace for Victoria but goals from Peter Gaffney, Sahand Mehrkhavari and Dean Triffitt appeared to have given Southern NSW the win. A late equaliser from Manny Karas earned Victoria what could be a precious point.

In the open women's competition NSW Thunder look the team to beat early on as they trounced Southern NSW 6-0 in their opening match. A brace of goals from Clare Walsh was added to by Hayley Buckingham, Stephanie Haim, Rhiannon Fleming and Chanel Turner as the Thunder ran riot.

Equally impressive were NSW Lightning who cruised to a 4-0 win over Northern NSW Hawks. Lauren Ralston opened the scoring early on for the Lightning and they never looked back from there, adding to their tally at regular intervals.

Hometown squad ACT Cobras were also big winners on Day One seeing off Victoria 3-0 in front of a decent evening crowd at the AIS Arena. An early goal from Luisa Marzotto set the

scene and when Laura Jones made it 2-0 it was game over. A third goal midway through the second period from Sarah Crittenden sealed a terrific result.

Not to be outdone, earlier in the day Queensland had started the women's tournament with a bang winning an entertaining match with Western Australia by 2-0. Rebekah Stott and Kate Orkild struck for the Queenslanders who looked like a solid unit.

Day Two sees the open women's competition fit in three rounds meaning that come tomorrow evening we should have a much clearer picture as to the likely make-up of the final four whilst Canberran eyes will be on the open men's clash between the two home teams the Cobras and the Colts.

DAY ONE RESULTS

Men's Open

NSW Thunder 2 (Chris Zeballos, Daniel Martinez) defeated ACT Cobras 1 (Marcel Munoz)
ACT Colts 3 (Maxime Jacquin, Victor Yanes, Marcin Zygmunt) defeated South Australia 1 (Jarrod Noel)

NSW Lightning 3 (Ediz Alkpaya, Tuan Cao, Daniel Fulton) defeated Northern NSW Hunter 2 (Chris Berlin, Luke Drinkwater)

Victoria 3 (Oner Simsek (2), Manny Karas) drew with Southern NSW 3 (Peter Gaffney, Sahand Mehrkhvari, Dean Triffitt)

Women's Open

Queensland 2 (Rebekah Stott, Kate Orkild) defeated Western Australia 0

NSW Lightning 4 (Lauren Ralston, own goal, Evelyn Chronis, Ashley Francis) defeated NNSW Hawks 0

ACT Cobras 3 (Luisa Marzotto, Laura Jones, Sarah Crittenden) defeated Victoria 0

NSW Thunder 6 (Clare Walsh (2), Stephanie Haim, Hayley Buckingham, Chanel Turner, Rhiannon Fleming) defeated Southern NSW 0