

# Finals



Gagan Chatha with the score. Photo by Graham Shellswell

## Closing Thoughts

This tournament has had some truly outstanding games and thankfully finals day didn't disappoint. With sunblock and ice cream at the ready (and the old faithful British Summer Time saving the best for last), a packed out stand was treated to three World Championship Finals. The unpredictable now seemingly commonplace, it won't surprise many that two bronze medals were decided in sudden-death before the Finals Arena even saw a pull.

The Australian women appeared to have the better of Canada at 9-5 after the first half. However, a huge comeback saw the Canadians score incessantly as they overwhelmed the Stingrays' offensive confidence in the second half. The game ended 13-12 to Canada, who will be relieved to have got their hands on bronze after a deflating semi-final loss.

In the neighbouring pitch Great Britain Open lost in sudden-death from 12-9 up, as four consecutive conceded points left them 12-13 losers to an ever-jubilant Japan. GB threw deep to an expecting defence at 12-12, and Japan made outstanding plays in the late stages to keep their comeback hopes alive and win the 21st and final sudden-death result of the tournament. Perhaps more importantly, the Japanese played with unshakeable belief when they had the disc at the end of the game and their resolve certainly paid off. A sad ending for the home crowd who were out in support, and may have briefly yet wrongly felt that the Bronze was theirs.

USA Mixed trampled through the tournament, and their dominance didn't subside for the final. They dissected Australia who stuck to their deep plan with unwavering loyalty, but couldn't get a scratch on the gold medallists who took the game 17-4.

The headline result of the day however goes to the Japanese Women, who shocked crowds around the world as they played a ruthlessly smart game and beat the seemingly unbeatable. Japan hardly placed a foot wrong in this matchup, and USA couldn't get the disc off them when it mattered. American skill and athleticism remained astonishing throughout with Jacelyn Verzuh dominant once again both as a defender and a receiver.

However the Japanese game was a masterclass of patience as they made playing

deep in their own endzone look like a throw in the park. Small hammers dived over the marks to keep the disc moving, and hucks were often completed as soon as the handlers were able to break out of the USA zone. The team built up a big enough buffer to resist the late game surge from USA, and at 17-15 completed a stunning upset entirely worthy of Japan's new title as World Under 23 Champions. USA did not play a bad game, but Japan were close to perfect.

In the Open final, Canada and USA didn't disappoint the promise of a physically intense display of Ultimate. Canada's talismanic Gagan Chatha happily skied clusters of the American squad at a time in an outstanding offensive performance. The USA's figurehead Dalton Smith was involved in a less positive physicality with a wild bid that contributed to the calling of a spirit timeout. With uncertainty about exactly who had called or suggested it, USA chose to take the timeout to ensure that both teams were playing from the same rulebook. Hands were shaken between teams and the atmosphere restored. The game resumed cleaner, but the blocks didn't dry up with USA's Trent Dillon getting a particularly sweet play on a deep cut to stop the score. The ensuing possession was the last of the tournament, as USA turned deep for Gold.

As quick as it started the Under 23 Championships 2015 is behind us. While players and coaches return to their homes, the St. Albans fields lose their international significance. Attention won't move off London for long though, as many of the participants and most of the organising staff look ahead to the senior World Championships 2016 where, once again, this site will hold at stake the hopes and dreams of the World Ultimate scene.

# Thank You

Thank you to all of the athletes and coaches, physios and medical staff, site team, caterers and volunteers, the tournament organising committee, WFDF representatives and special guests, and of course the many spectators and fans at home. You all made this a fantastic event!



Photo by Claire Baker

## Player Profile

Name: Simone Lundegårdh

Age: 21

Team: Sweden Under 23 Women and Uppsala

Best game you've ever played: In Dublin against Australia, it was very windy but we played very hard and won it.

Best achievement: Winning the National championship with my club team

Sexiest kit at the tournament: I think the USA

If you had to be on any other team who would it be: Canada because I like their spirit and they seem like a nice team

Best song to get you up for a game: Girl from Sweden by Eric Saade

Best thing about the UK so far: The people! They are all really nice

Frisbee idol: I think Brodie Smith. He's cool

Anything else: Thanks for a very good tournament!



Simone Lundegårdh. Photo by Claire Baker