

**Women's Premier League Play Off Final 2011: Finchley Gunns v Sheffield United**  
**@ High Wycombe CC - 18/09/11**

While the sun was shining benignly during the 11am toss, by half past the High Wycombe valley was flanked by ominous grey cloud. However the rain stayed away for most of the day with just a 15 minute interruption during the 1<sup>st</sup> innings and a longer burst during the interval which delayed the start of the 2<sup>nd</sup> innings. Gunns won the toss and inserted Sheffield, who made a promising start with four boundaries struck in the first three overs. The opening bowlers then managed to tighten their lines resulting in the dismissal of Sheffield's top run maker of the season, Emily Marriott – lbw to Natasha Miles, with just 18 runs on the scoreboard. This brought captain Salliann Briggs to the crease and the score steadily built up to the 50 mark in the 16<sup>th</sup> over of the innings which marked the departure of Christelene Steinhobel, who attempted to go aerial and was caught at long on by Dani Wyatt off of Dani Warren's bowling.

Pakistan international, Urooj Khan joined the captain and they put together a 70 run partnership in 98 balls before Warren induced Briggs, the more prolific of the pair, into mistiming a shot straight into the hands of Charlotte Edwards at point. She'd amassed 65 runs from 81 deliveries including 7 boundaries. Sheffield's keeper, Lauren Winfield, was next up to the plate and both batsmen were soon flaying the ball to the ropes with great regularity. The 100 partnership came up in 83 deliveries, but 2 balls later Khan was undone by the change in pace of the returning opening bowler, Ria Ravel, and perished lbw for 72. Score was now 226-4 with 4½ overs remaining. Winfield found another gear to launch the only 6 of the match then farmed the strike to see the score through to 259-5 at the break. Her 82 runs came from 58 balls with 13 x 4 & 1 x 6.

The extended rain delay caused a reduction in the 2<sup>nd</sup> innings overs to 45 and a winning target of 234 runs. Gunn's captain, Jenny Halstead, had been their top run maker during the 2011 campaign, but like her counterpart, Marriott, she was soon back in the pavilion (lbw to Beth Brown for 5) and was followed there in the next over by fellow opener Helena Stolle, stumped by Winfield off Katie Levick for 3. This left the England pair of Dani Wyatt & Charlotte Edwards to repair the early damage and soothe Gunnersbury nerves, which they proceeded to do in exemplary fashion. The 50 partnership took 77 balls with Wyatt the principal protagonist scoring 34 of them. By the time the partnership reached 150 (165 balls), Edwards' score had just overtaken Wyatt's who seemed to be flagging as the chase reached a conclusion. Edwards reached her century from 98 balls (15 x 4), but although she tried to steer her partner to three figures, the match was ended in the 41<sup>st</sup> over by a 5 run wide while Wyatt was still 2 runs short. Gunns ran out winners by 8 wickets with nearly 5 over to spare.

Despite the recent showery weather, the pitch seemed to be a batsman's delight (earlier in the season I'd seen the Staffordshire minor counties side knocking deliveries out of the ground here with impunity) and few of the bowlers will take much comfort from their figures. Katie Levick, the Yorkshire leggie who opened the bowling and was bowled straight through, seemed to do the best containment job (9-0-31-1), although local girl Dani Warren's figures of 10-0-32-2 edge it on paper.

This was probably the most entertaining Premier League Final I've watched in recent times, certainly the best played on a non-first class ground.