

Belgium Masters Five Nations Women's Hockey Tournament 2026

Belgian Old Panthers have scored again, and even more successfully! The inaugural tournament hosted by Old Panthers in 2025 as a Four Nations hockey tournament was the first ever women's only Grand Masters hockey tournament. Following on from this, BOP held a follow-up tournament in 2026, again at the Royal Hockey Club Namurois, Namur, Belgium and included Five Nations. This event in the calendar is very much welcomed by WGMA which is encouraging smaller and shorter festivals to Accommodate the growing number of masters players of 60 years plus.

The tournament took place over the weekend 1-3 May and 14 teams (over 200 players) participated from Belgium, Netherlands, Scotland, Wales and England, plus Alliance. Age teams were entered by Belgium Old Panthers (55+, 60+, 65+) and Netherlands (65+, 70+); mixed age teams of 60-80 were entered by Scottish Thistles (2), Wales, LX Ladies (4) and Alliance (2). The 14 teams were split into 2 pools of seven, so each team had 6 matches of 2 x 20 minutes over Friday and Saturday. Points were awarded as follows: 2 for a win with a bonus point for a 2-goal difference, and 1 point for a draw. On Sunday morning each team played a cross-over match to determine the final order of teams, and the presentation of specially commissioned Namur pottery was held at 13:30 on Sunday.

In order to accommodate all the teams a splendid Gala dinner was held on both Thursday and Friday evenings in the wonderful function room at Brasserie Francoise, a 19th century building in Place Saint-Aubain near the Cathedral. An excellent 3 course meal, accompanied by wine and music, was enjoyed by all, in this historical, Atmospheric gem. Dinner was also available at the clubhouse on Friday and Saturday evenings, and before the meal on Saturday enthusiastic players participated in an Old- School Hockey match. This was followed by the Battle of the Namur Stilt Walkers, an early 15th century Namur tradition which involves two teams of jousters attempting to knock each other off their stilts. A jousting's aim is to bring down all the jousting from the other team as, once a player has fallen, they cannot get back on their stilts. After this 'performance', for those brave enough, there was opportunity to have a try out on their stilts!

Congratulations to both Thistles teams who headed the two pools and drew 0-0 in the crossover to be joint winners. Second pool placed teams Panthers 55 and LX3 took 3rd and 4th place, but to reiterate what the Thistles' captain said, the tournament is about participating in the hockey and not about the winning. It is also about the friendships formed or renewed in the spirit of hockey and the mutual respect for good team play.

A huge thank you to Namur Hockey Club for hosting the event, ensuring that the pitches were watered over two very hot days and making everyone feel so welcome. Very special thanks go to Dominique Havelange and Ruth Harland from Panthers for all their planning, organization and enthusiasm in making this event happen. The attention to detail in supporting participating teams prior to the tournament ensured that every aspect was covered and the precision of the match timing allowed teams to enjoy 280 minutes of pitch time over the 3 days! A superb tournament indeed.