

International Women's Hockey – Scotland v South Africa




Scotland stun visiting South Africans

With the South African women's hockey team some eight places above Scotland in the World' Ranking, it looked again as if they would be playing catch-up to the visitors. The match did not go by the script, however, and the home side took the first of four encounters at Peffermill three goals to two.

They had to be on the ball from the start as the visitors went on the offensive from the off, and some desperate defending by the Scots in the first 10 minutes of the match. However, the first proper chance of the match fell to Scotland, but the break away upfield left Nikki Lloyd surrounded by defenders and unable to get her shot on target. Another period of attacking from the South African's had a bouncing ball, from a shot by (World Record holder in almost every hockey statistic) Pietie Coetzee, cleared off the line.

Five minutes later and another break from Scotland, this time up the left, saw an inside ball from Heather Elder find Ali Howie on the 25 and she took the ball up into the 'D' where her deflected shot spun up past the goalkeeper and into the net. 1-0 to the Scots girls.

The rest of the half – or nearly so – was dominated by the visitors, getting into the shooting area on four or five occasions and only some inspired saves by 'keeper Amy Gibson kept them at bay.

 With less than two minutes to go in the half, following a fluffed penalty corner attempt by Coetzee, Scotland were off again, this time up the right hand side. Nikki Lloyd took

the ball half the length of the pitch and into the 'D' where she found a gap in the defence to strike. The 'keeper half saved, but Morag McLellan was on hand to tap the ball into the goal to leave the home side 2-0 ahead at the hooter.

Again, from the off, South Africa went on the offensive and took the game to the home side, but the Scots weren't long in taking it back. Four minutes in and a penalty corner, awarded when Vikki Bunce was tripped in the area, had the strike from Kidd blocked. The game flowed to-and-fro with both sides having chances but failing to convert, before the visitors were awarded a penalty corner for obstruction 13 minutes in. This time there was no mistake and the shot from Coetzee was blasted past the flailing stick of Emily Maguire and into the bottom corner of the goal. 2-1 to Scotland.

The next ten minutes were all South Africa – apart from a brief foray by the Scots – as they tried to pull level, Gibson pulling another two fine saves out of the bag to keep them in second place.

Then it looked as if the home side had another goal on the board, but the cross-goal shot by Kidd rattled off the post with the 'keeper rooted to the spot.

It only took another two minutes for Kidd to finally get on the scoresheet with a fine reverse stick shot which had the South African 'keeper well beaten. 3-1 up against the team who were 10th in the 2012 Olympics was a tremendous boost to the Scots girls who, only this year, went full time for a trial period. Was it working? It seemed to be up to now...

☒ For the last ten minutes, South Africa piled on the pressure, with Scotland barely seeing the ball. And it was to be Coetzee who scored again. Another penalty corner award saw the South African drag flick the ball past the 'keeper to notch up her gazillionth goal on the World scene and her second in this match. 3-2 with minutes to go... The last few minutes were a bit frantic with Scotland trying to hold the

ball and South Africa trying to prevent them, so it was a tremendous relief all round when the final hooter went to give the Scots a historic win against their Southern Hemisphere opponents.

With the first of a four match series in the bag, the Scotland team can now look forward to the other three games with a high level of confidence, but, the cynics might be tempted to say the South Africa were not long off the gruelling flight, so maybe weren't quite in the groove just yet. We'll see...

Photos – John Preece

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