

Ladies Hockey – Scotland v South Africa



Ten Goal Thriller at Peffermill

Scotland and South Africa played their fourth and last game of their International friendly series at Peffermill on Tuesday night and shared ten goals in a thrilling encounter of a match that was full of excitement for the, unfortunately, fairly small crowd.

The match started fairly evenly with both sides getting forward, but without much in the way of chances on goal. Scotland were first to 'have a go' having the first penalty corner awarded after six minutes. The ball was passed across the top of the 'D' to Becky Merchant, but her reverse stick shot went high and was deemed dangerous by the umpire (the 'first strike' from a penalty corner must rise no higher than the backboard, or it is considered dangerous. Drag flicks are exempt...)

It was to be the visitors who had the first chance through open play, but Pietie Coetzee's shot was saved by Amy Gibson. Scotland then had another corner, but that was negated by a Scottish foot. A few minutes later, though the scoring was opened by Holy Cram for the home side, deflecting a pass past the South African 'keeper to make it 1-0 to Scotland.



South Africa then managed drew level just before half time with a goal from Coetzee who turned the ball past Gibson to level the scoring.

The second half was a much more animated affair with both

teams on the attack from the start. South Africa were first to threaten with a series of five penalty corners in succession, but in spite of the efforts of Coetzee and Bobbs, none were converted. That gave Scotland a bit of a lift and they were next on the scoreboard. Another corner was awarded and Becky Merchant eventually found the back of the net after a bit of passing the ball around.

Two minutes later and South Africa pulled level with another drag-flick from Coetzee. 2-2, and still 25 minutes to play. Only three of those minutes were to pass, before Scotland went back into the lead when a pass back from the baseline from Ali Howie found a sliding Nikki Lloyd who turned the ball into the net. 3-2 to Scotland, but South Africa were by no means looking down. They pulled back level again seconds later and then two goals in the space of a minute, from Coetzee and Keet gave them a 5-3 lead and it looked from the sidelines like that was it with less than five minutes left on the clock. However, the Scots were not for lying down, and in the final minutes scored two of their own to draw level at five goals apiece. The first was scored by Linda Clement who got in front of the 'keeper and deflected a cross into the net and the second was by Ali Howie.

And that appeared to be that, but another final seconds' penalty corner gave Scotland the chance to take the game. As the hooter went during the set-up, Scotland flooded the area with players to maximise the scoring chance. However, they got a wee bit ahead of themselves and the striker mistimed her approach. They performed a panic reset, but the resultant strike was deflected onto the post and the umpire blew up for full time.

What a match to end on, with the sides sharing ten goals in what was, for South Africa, a worryingly evenly matched game. Scotland, although they lost the series 2-1 with two draws,

can hold their heads high, having held onto the coat tails of the eleventh best side in the World and gave them a good, hard run for their money.

Photos by John Preece

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