

The Edinburgh Reporter's Weekly Sports Round-up



Men's Scotland hockey squad in their new kit for the EuroHockey Championships II, Vienna

It has been another exciting week for sport in Edinburgh this week, with athletes performing on both domestic and global stages. This installment of the Edinburgh Reporter's weekly sports round-up includes news from the opening weekend of the Scottish football league, developments off the pitch at Murrayfield, a preview of Scottish Hockey's European preparations, the latest speedway results, and Edinburgh's contingent competing at the swimming world championships in Barcelona.

Men's Hockey

In hockey the Scotland Senior Men's team flew to Vienna on Friday for the EuroHockey Nations Championships II from 5-11 August.

The Scots currently lie in the second tier of International EuroHockey and will be hoping that the 18-man squad selected will be able to continue their fine summer form and gain promotion to the EuroHockey Nations Championships 2015.

One of those players to have been included in the traveling squad is Callum Duke who spoke to The Edinburgh Reporter.

A recent graduate of Edinburgh University, Duke said:- "I'm absolutely delighted to have been selected for such a competitive and in-form squad.

"We have been playing well together all summer and I think the squad has a great balance of youth and experience.

“If we continue to work hard and carry on our current form I think we have a great chance of having a successful tournament and achieving promotion to the top flight.”

The Scots who have won 7 of their last 9 international matches, are pitched in Pool A alongside Azerbaijan, France and Wales, with Pool B made up of hosts Austria, Italy, Russia and Ukraine.

The top two teams in each group will then progress to the semi-finals and those that make it to the final will automatically earn the much coveted promotion to the top division.

Alternatively the teams that place in the bottom two of their group will enter into a relegation play-off with the two losers dropping down to division 3.

Scotland begin their campaign against Azerbaijan on Monday (5th), followed by France on Tuesday (6th), and finally Wales on Thursday (7th), before entering in to either the play-offs for promotion or relegation.

A win here will guarantee a top-two finish in the event, which means that the team will be eligible for promotion to the top tier of European Hockey, a not impossible task as they have won seven out of their last nine International matches.

Hopefully, the hot weather, which severely affected the U18 Men, will have abated somewhat.

Good luck boys!

Meanwhile the Senior Women's side who are in EuroHockey's top division will this week find out who has made traveling squad for the Nations Championships in Belgium 17th – 25th.

Rugby Union

Without doubt one of the biggest sporting stories to come out

of the capital this week has been from Murrayfield, as Edinburgh rugby unveiled their new head coach.

Since parting company with Michael Bradley towards the end of last season the Gunners have been working with an interim coaching team headed by Stevie Scott.

This week however, the rugby club announced that the experienced coach Alan Solomons will take over as head coach for the coming season.

The former South African assistant coach has a long and impressive CV including successful spells working with Ulster, Eastern Province and the Barbarians.

Solomons will head a coaching team at Edinburgh which will include Stevie Scott, who will stay on as forwards coach and they will no doubt be hoping to change the capital side's fortunes of late.

Edinburgh Rugby managing director, David Davies, said:- "I'm delighted to confirm the appointment of such experienced, respected and passionate coaches.

"I'm confident they will provide the foundations for our long-term objective of becoming a force on the domestic and European stage."

Solomons was recently quoted saying, "This is a very exciting role at a club which has a huge amount of potential.

"The ambition and desire of everyone involved with the club to do whatever it takes to build its success, and the plans being put in place to achieve that, are very impressive.

"I'm very much looking forward to arriving in Edinburgh."

In addition to finding a new coach, Scottish Rugby this week announced a new shirt sponsorship deal with BT Sport, which will run for four years. (More on that from John Preece below)

The announcement culminated with the release of the Scotland national side's new home kit, whilst Edinburgh fans will be able to see how the logo will look on the front of their strip on August 15th as the club are due to release a new playing jersey for the coming season.

More rugby news from John Preece:-

It was announced earlier this week that Edinburgh and Glasgow would carry 'BT Sport' logos on their shirts as part of a four year sponsorship deal with the internet, and now live sport, provider.

Although RaboDirect matches will not be shown on the BT sports channels, it is a significant demonstration of support for sport, and especially rugby, North of the Border. A selection of RaboDirect PRO12 matches will be shown live, but on BBC Alba – Gaelic commentary, but English 'expert' analysis and 'referee sound' – (Sky 143 and Freeview 8 in Scotland), Wales (Sky 991) and Northern Ireland (Sky 992), with almost all of Heineken Cup involvement broadcast live, or delayed live, on Sky Sports. The new season kicks off at the beginning of September, with the Heineken Cup following on in October.

Other, possibly more significant, news from Edinburgh Rugby was the unveiling of their new Head Coach. Alan Solomons has coached at the highest level of rugby in South Africa, guiding Western Province to Currie Cup victory, before going on to coach the Stormers and Ulster to success in their respective leagues. He has led the Barbarians to wins over the home nations, as well as wins against as the Springboks and the All Blacks as assistant coach. Solomons also spent time as South Africa's assistant coach.

He comes from the Head Coach post at the Southern Kings in South Africa where he was tasked between 2010 and 2013 with building an amateur Union into a Super 15 status side. His record in that time period was three Currie Cup finals, the

Kings winning in 2011 and 1013.



Edinburgh back, Greg Tonks has taken the opportunity to extend his current contract until 2015. Winning his first Scottish cap in the summer, Tonks also featured in 26 out of 28 matches for Edinburgh this season, as well as picking up the Player and Player's Player of the Season Awards at the team's annual dinner.

(Photo – Tonks in action against the Dragons in the 2012-13 season)

Rounding off the round-up, is the news that Scotland have yet another shirt design for the supporters to spend their hard-earned on next season. Falling back on the classic navy blue, with the collar and main sponsor 'RBS' in white and an embossed thistle graphic on the back, the design is a throw-back to the days when we used to win stuff.

The new shirt is for the 15-a-side teams only, the Sevens sides will wear a similar design, but with a purple shoulder panel. All the parents out there will be overjoyed to hear that there is also a complete range of replica, warm-up and leisure clothing being released at the same time to accompany the new 'old' look.

Swimming

Edinburgh swimmer Craig McNally made an impressive start to his senior swim career in the Barcelona FNA World Championships this week.

The 20-year-old swimmer was performing in his debut meet and made it to final of the 200m backstroke.

Not overwhelmed by the occasion, the Warrender swimmer posted a time of 1.55.67secs to smash his lifetime best by over half a second and with it the Scottish record.

The time which was just 0.09secs shy of the British record posted by Jamie Goddard, was good enough for 6th place on the day with Ryan Lochte taking the Gold with a time of 1.53.79secs, but marks an encouraging start to McNally's senior career.

Another young Edinburgh swimmer who has made his mark on the global stage this week in the world championships is Daniel Wallace.

The ex-Warrender swimmer who has spent the last two years living and training in Gainesville, Florida competed in the men's 400m individual medley, placing 7th in the final.

Wallace posted a new PB of 4.14.52secs in the semi-finals, beating his previous best by over a second, only to go even faster in the final with a time of 4.13.72secs. Whilst the 20 year old wasn't in and amongst the medals this time around, at his current rate of improvement, he could be a force to be reckoned with come Glasgow Commonwealth games next year.

Compatriot Michael Jamieson however, had a less successful week in the pool. The Olympic silver medallist and world number 1 had struggled with fitness coming into the championships following a bicep injury and could only manage a disappointing 5th place.

Elsewhere in the water, GB's men's relay team made it to the final of the 4x200m freestyle. Edinburgh-born Jak Scott replaced Ieuan Lloyd in the team for the final alongside Robbie Renwick, James Guy and Josh Walsh but the quartet's time of 7.12.00secs was only good enough for 8th place in what was a very strong field.

Football

The long wait for the new season came to an end for football fans this weekend as the Scottish leagues got under way.

Unfortunately both Edinburgh sides got off to a losing start as both Hibs and Hearts lost by one goal to nil.

Hibs got their campaign under way at Easter Road against Motherwell with both sides hoping to avenge recent defeats in Europe.

Hibs made five changes to the team that started against Malmo last week as Pat Fenlon handed home debuts to new signings James Collins, Michael Nelson and Owain Tudor- Jones.

Despite the fixture with Motherwell historically yielding high-scoring games (thinking particularly of the 6-6 match in 2010), this tie was dominated by both defenses, and one of very few clear-cut chances

It wasn't until after half-time that the home side looked as though they could force an opener, with a powerfully struck free-kick from Liam Craig, a close header by debutant James Collins, and another chance that went agonisingly wide as Craig slid in at the back post.

However it was Motherwell who broke the deadlock with just 8 minutes to go, as substitute Henri Anier latched onto a long ball and calmly slotted past Hibs keeper Ben Williams, and snatched the 3-points for Stuart McCall's men.

[\(Read also our Hibs v Motherwell match report here\)](#)

Hearts' first game of the season saw them travel to McDiarmid Park to take on St Johnstone.

With all that is going on behind the scenes at Hearts at the moment, this season looks like its going to be a huge struggle, not least because of the 15 points they have been docked before play even began.

The Jambos fielded an extremely youthful side, with only three of the starting XI over 21, and when the side went a goal down on 25 minutes, failed to mount a comeback.

The goal itself was surrounded by controversy as the linesman had initially flagged for offside, but after a consultation with the referee, Stevie May's goal stood for St Johnstone.

The busiest man on the pitch was Hearts keeper Jamie MacDonald, whose brilliant display kept the Edinburgh side in the match right until the final whistle.

Despite the introduction of Jason Holt and Billy King in the second half who looked lively, Gary Locke's side struggled to muster enough creativity to pose any threat of an equaliser.

Next week's fixture sees the two Edinburgh side pitched against each other in the first local derby of the season, with both sides desperate to find their first win of the season.

Speedway

Having got the better of Berwick Bandits on home turf at Armadale last week, the Edinburgh Scotwaste Monarchs suffered a narrow defeat in Saturday's reverse fixture, losing 44-46.

The Monarchs led the tie by four points after 8 races but by race 11 they had slumped to a 6 point deficit. The Edinburgh team rallied enough in the closing races to come out of the match with a point, but in the end the victory was just out of their grasp.

As the British Speedway Premier League moves past the half-way stage, the Monarchs currently lie in second place behind Workington Comets.

The next league fixture is at home against Sheffield Tigers on Friday 9th August, 7:30pm.