


Women's Hockey – Scotland at Eurohockey Champs



Scotland's women, unlike the men, qualified for the EuroHockey Championships in Boom in Belgium. Competing in Pool B alongside England, Germany and Spain, Scotland were looking like the whipping girls in the group with Spain, at 14th in the World the nearest team to the 19th ranked Scots.

First match up was against Germany, a match they were expected to lose by a wide margin. However, it didn't quite go to plan for Germany, 'relying' on an own goal to secure a one goal victory. With Germany dominating large portions of the match, Scotland could only break up field on a few occasions, but went close a couple of times. At the other end Scots goalie, Amy Gibson (pictured below), played a miracle game to keep the score down, only a deflected strike from one of her own players, which she then deflected into the goal, getting past.

Scotland's second match was against Spain, and although the teams were ranked a bit closer, Spain went into the match as favourites. It wasn't a great start as Spain had the ball in the back of the net after just 26 seconds of the push-back,  seemingly confirming their status. Another couple of strikes on the Scottish goal had to be dealt with before they found their feet and in the 9th minute, with a penalty corner strike from Nikki Kidd (pictured in action against South Africa at Peffermill), Scotland pulled level. They then dominated the match until just short of 30 minutes, when Spain went into the lead again with a second goal from Maria Gomez. The second half was a fairly tight affair with both sides having chances, but Spain held on to the end for the win.

Third and final group stage match was against The Auld Enemy,

England (pantomime boos and hisses all round!). Lying 15 World places above the Scots it looked like another potential hammering for the girls in Blue. Rumour had it that Scotland were going to lie down and save themselves for the play-offs – a rumour soon scotched by team coach, Gordon Shepherd. And from the off, a hammering looked on the cards as England forced Scotland on the defensive from the off. But again the storm was weathered and it was Scotland who dominated the majority of the first half, only to loose a crucial goal seconds from half time. Coming out for the second half, Scotland went on the offensive, Nikki Kidd scoring from another penalty corner, and it looked as though it was England who were the more lowly ranked. However, a scrambled goal from Samantha Quek gave England the lead and ultimately the win. This is where the difference in rankings and experience showed through. In spite of being under the cosh for the majority of the match, England kept their heads and eventually won the match. Scotland, on the other hand, were only able to convert one of a dozen penalty corners, thus perpetuating the ‘myth’ that Scots teams can play anyone off the park, but can’t score to save themselves. Great pity really, as the team played out of their skins against teams with greater resources in terms of facilities, players and budgets (Spain have recently had a 25 Million Euros injection of cash) and could have – indeed, should have – won at least two of the games, but... Always a ‘but’.

On another, slightly less interesting, note, listening to the Radio Scotland show ‘Off the Ball’ at the weekend, one of the presenters – who *may* have been having a wee joke, given the nature of the programme – said something along the lines of “I don’t know why John Beattie bothers with other sports. We’re a ‘fitba’ nation and that’s what we should talk about”.

Hmmm. Given that Scotland are 50th in the FIFA rankings (74th before we beat Croatia) but 23rd in Men’s Hockey, 19th in Women’s Hockey, 9th in Rugby, second in singles tennis (thanks

Andy!) and were top in some track cycling disciplines until Chris Hoy hung up his bike – are we really a 'Fitba' Nation? Discuss....