


# Hockey – National League September Spectacular – Day 1

Scottish Hockey held their first in a series of National League 'Big Weekend' events at Peffermill this weekend, and The Edinburgh Reporter was there to cover Day 1. The schedule had been reduced to three matches from four, but that still guaranteed a day of top class Scottish club hockey. 

First match on the field was Inverleith v AAM Gordonians and it was to be Gordonians who opened the scoring through their No. 9, Babicky. Their No 5, Stewart was green carded for a minor offence with less than 10 minutes on the clock. Gordonians were then to lose Stewart to a yellow card – a second green, before Inverleith pulled one back five minutes before the break, but Gordonians Hamilton scored their second just before the break to make it 2-1 at half time. Gordonians went further ahead just after the break with a second goal from Babicky, Inverleith came close as a deflected shot went over the bar, but with scored with a penalty corner from Adam MacKenzie. Just two minutes were to elapse before Gordonians restored their two goal lead with a spectacular diving effort from Coffey. Gordonians had another player green carded for taking too long at a penalty corner, but the delay didn't faze MacKenzie (pictured) who fired his drag flick into the back of the net for Inverleith's third. Another Gordonians player saw yellow, which gave Inverleith the advantage, but a chance when presented with an open goal went a-begging, before MacKenzie drew the sides level with a penalty flick awarded for a goal line infringement by Gordonians. And that was how it finished, 4-4. Gordonians probably had the edge overall and saw several balls flash across the Inverleith goal, but too many cards gave the Edinburgh side the opportunity to pull the draw out of the bag.



Second match on, and the first of the two women's matches was CALA Edinburgh v Western Wildcats. Wildcats were fielding Scotland's Kareena Marshall, but even her class couldn't prevent CALA from dominating most of the 70 minutes and going on to take the win. And they were soon on the scoreboard with an early goal from Emma Watson. CALA continued to press the opposition – dodging a bullet with a goal line clearance on the way – before going two up with a short range effort from Eilidh Thomson. Just before the break, Kerri Smyth added a third to take the half time score to 3-0 in favour of a fairly dominant CALA side. Interestingly, it was Marshall who lead the half time team talk, using her experience to coach and advise how to play CALA in the second half. And it seemed to work, as Western had much more of the game in the second half, and had CALA on the back foot on a number of occasions. However, CALA still retained the upper hand and got close early on but Western were saved by their keeper taking the ball off the defender's stick when she was put through with a defence splitting pass, but a sliding attempt from Emma MacGregor (pictured) a few minutes later found the net. With less than 10 minutes o the clock, Wildcats pulled one back through a Marshall penalty corner, but in spite of both teams having chances, and Western's keeper having a couple of tremendous saves, the final score was to remain 4-1 to CALA



Two down and one to go as Watsonians faced Grange for the final match of the day. This was to prove a much more evenly balanced match with neither team looking like they were going to run away with the game. Grange were first to score through Lee McNamara after 15 minutes of play. Watsonians scored the next two gaols from Nikki Stobie and Kirsty Hill to take the lead over the visitors, but Emily Renshaw drew the sides level with a goal before half time. Grange drew two gaols ahead in

the second half with a goal after seven minutes with their third from Beth Dodds, followed quickly by their fourth from Lorna Cruikshank. 4-2 ahead with most of the half remaining, Grange looked like they were gaining the upper hand over their cross-Edinburgh rivals, but Stobie netted her second of the match with 22 minutes still left on the clock. The remainder of the match was fairly even – although the Grange keeper was able to stand spectating on the edge of her area at times – with both side having chances they were not able to convert. It was looking like a win for Grange, when Watsonians broke upfield, and with two seconds to go, Stobie received a cross ball behind the defence and slammed it past the keeper for her third and Watsonians fourth to give the ‘home’ side a well deserved draw. Obviously disappointed after the match, the Grange team then had to sit through the coaches post-match dissection, which, the ER reporter having heard a few in the past, was reassuringly positive and didn’t dwell on loss of that final goal. well done that man....

With Day 2 looking, unfortunately, like a ‘no-show’ for the Edinburgh Reporter, it will be reported in next weeks Sports Round-up.

So, does it look as if Scottish Hockey’s ‘September Spectacular’ National League Big Weekend will go on to spawn a major upsurge in the interest in hockey as a sport?

Probably not, given the obsession this country has with football.

However, with top club sides playing at a single venue over a single weekend, with similar off-field back-up as the International side got in the summer, hopefully the SHU can attract some new blood – be that players, officials, admin staff or sponsors – that this tremendous sport deserves to enable it to grow and increase our current position in World Hockey. Besides, how many other sports are going to deliver three matches of non-stop action and 21 goals in an afternoon?

(Can anyone else guess who the erstwhile hockey player is here folks? Ed.)

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