

Injuries hamper Midlothian's progress in Portugal tournament



Injuries to key players coupled with a lack of practice at penalty kicks denied Midlothian Walking Footballers European glory in Vilamoura yesterday despite the team being unbeaten in six games played.

After qualifying for the quarter-finals of the inaugural Brown's International Walking Football Tournament, Midlothian faced the hosts Brown's Leisure on a rainy afternoon in the Algarve.

Despite three injury doubts, the Scots played with their preferred line-up with Glenn Milne in goal, Jim Shepherd and Steve McDonald at the back and Ali Patterson and Jim Hall to roam as and when needed.

Midlothian very quickly gained control of the tie and managed to pen their opponents in their own half, so it was no surprise when Jim Hall put them in front in the sixth minute with a deft and clever left foot shot. They continued to keep their opponents on the back foot and created numerous chances to increase their lead however failure to do so was to cost them dear.

Midway through the second half Brown's stunned their opponents with a long range speculative shot which somehow came to nestle in the back of the Midlothian net.



The Scottish side dominated the final stages of the game however they could not break down a stubborn well drilled

defence.

Midlothian's involvement in the main tournament sadly ended in a dreaded penalty shoot out lottery.

As losing quarter finalists, Midlothian qualified for the semi-final of the Brown's Consolation Plate however the injuries took their toll and the squad had to reshuffle with Kenny McDonald taking over in goal and Viv Wallace playing from the start.

The game against Farnham finished in a 1-1 draw thanks to some heroic goalkeeping from Kenny who also saved two penalties in the shoot out however his team-mates missed all three and Midlothian's involvement in the tournament finished.

There was some consolation however as the squad now travel to watch Scotland play Gibraltar in the Euro 16 qualifiers.

The tournament was won by Soccer Olhanese Strollers who were skippered by former England Under 21 international and FA Cup winner Kevin Kilcline.

Afterwards Kenny McDonald told the Edinburgh Reporter: " Congratulations to Soccer Olhanese Strollers. They played some excellent matches. Sadly the first day of the tournament took it's toll and three of our first five picked up injuries but played on bravely in the quarter finals. Once again we lost our tie on penalty kicks despite leading for most of the tie. We exited the competition without losing a single game in normal time.

"We were also the only team to manage a thrilling draw with the eventual winners in a game which we might well have won. The team was captained by Brian Kilcline a former pro and FA cup winner with Coventry City. He was the outstanding player of the tournament and a really nice guy as well. All in all it was another memorable experience.

"A big thanks to all particularly to my mates in the Midlothian team who have been such great sports and superb company. They have been great ambassadors for Midlothian Walking football. A big special vote of thanks to our Vivian Wallace for her work and effort to make it all possible and Saltire Sports for their sponsorship. Can we come back next year please ? We will have to practice penalties though."