

Hockey – Scotland v Ukraine, World League 2, 3rd/4th Place Play-off

Scots survive fourth quarter scare to take third place in Valencia.



Scotland held out in a tense fourth quarter battle with Ukraine, surviving a couple of penalty corners and a close-in shot, which keeper, Nikki Cochrane, stood up to, to take a 1-0 win and third place in the World League 2 Tournament in Valencia.

Scotland were fairly dominant for the first half, creating several half chances, but the Ukrainian defence were up to the task and seemed to always be in the right place to intercept and work the ball clear. The closest they came to scoring was very early on, but the deflected shot was saved close in by the keeper and, with Amy Brodie closing in, the defender was just able to clear the pads.

The Ukrainians did manage to get inside the Scots defence a couple of times but couldn't profit and, as at the other end, the attacks were tidied up and the ball cleared.



The breakthrough came seconds before half time when a penalty corner was awarded and, with the defence at sixes-and-sevens, Ali Howie was left unmarked next to the keeper and she deflected the ball into the net for the goal and a 1-0 lead.

The first quarter of the second half was very much a

continuation of the previous half, although Scotland saw more of the ball and of the opponents 'D'.

Still, however, that last wee bit was, not necessarily missing, but just a bit short of completion. And, as the half progressed, Ukraine started to come back as Scotland, with that slim, one goal margin, seemed to be getting a little edgy. The pressure was lifted a touch as, around the 40th minute, Ukraine were handed two green cards in quick succession for foul play.

Then there was a *deja vu* moment as, with three minutes to go, Ukraine were awarded a PC. However, this time, the ball was fired wide and Scotland ran the clock down to take a well deserved victory and that third place trophy.

This was an impressive run for Scotland considering that 11 of the players had not played in a tournament of this stature before and around half the team were under 22. They should have, at least drawn with Ukraine the first time around, but for an umpiring error and, in the match with Spain, while the loss was not wholly unexpected, the manner of the loss – two PF's – was a touch disappointing.



Regardless of all that, Spain did win the overall, beating Poland in the Final 2-0, but Scotland didn't miss out. Nikki Cochrane, the current Scottish first choice, was presented with the award for best keeper in the tournament. This caps a fine period for the Scot as not only this recognition, but she also celebrated her 50th Cap and was named, along with Amy Brodie and Sarah Robertson, in the women's Great Britain Hockey senior programme for the new Olympic cycle working towards Tokyo 2020.

On a personal note – Having spent the best part of two weeks, travelling, going to training and matches and eating with the

squad, my 'Player of the Tournament' ironically, didn't get to play.

The 'other' Scotland keeper, Lucy Camlin, did all the things that the rest of the squad and Cochrane did – training, preparing, eating, getting shouted at by Shep, more eating, sleeping, etc. – and not once did she even appear to be in any way disappointed or disaffected with her lot. Indeed, she was on the bench, encouraging her team mates from the sideline, helping with the little jobs that need done and generally doing everything she could to support Nikki Cochrane and the outfield players. To do that and probably be aware that, unless your fellow keeper was injured or your team were well ahead on the scoreboard, you probably wouldn't get a go, takes mental strength and self belief that most people – and I'm one – could only ever dream about. So, for that reason, Lucy Camlin, you are my Scottish 'Player of the Tournament'. Even if you are Irish.....



Images from the match will [appear here](#) over the next indeterminate period of time. It's been along two weeks.....