

Field hockey – Grassick aims to make world mark

Chris Grassick has had a lot of time to think after being out of international field hockey for almost a year because of a serious knee injury.

The spell on the sidelines has made him more hungry than ever to perform and the Edinburgh-born, Great Britain international will be key as Scotland, ranked No 23 in the world, face their biggest test in decades in the World League semi-finals in London from Thursday.

Midfielder Grassick's squad are underdogs in the star-studded tournament at Lee Valley and they open against India, ranked No 6 in the world, in a game live on BT Sport.

Then they play The Netherlands (ranked No 4 in the world) at 18.000 on Saturday followed by Pakistan (rated No 13) on Monday (noon) and complete their qualifying group matches against Canada, rated No 11 in the world, on Tuesday also at noon.

Grassick, a former Inverleith player who is skipper of English cracks Surbiton, said: "Obviously I have been out for almost a year and that's a very long time, but there is no concern from me.

"I feel so excited to be here and show what I am all about and I can't wait to link up again with a number of the Scottish boys who I have played with since the under-16s."

The 26-year-old former Napier University business management graduate (distinction) who captained Scotland in the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, added: "Being out for so long gives you a lot of thinking time and I am more hungry than ever to perform."

The main focus in training has been on honing their own game and being able to impose themselves on the pitch.

Grassick, who has more than 90 caps for Scotland and 20 for Great Britain, added: "We always scout each team we play against extensively and Thursday is no different.

"It's important we know what we are up against and look at how we can best implement our game on the opposition. We regularly watch video as a group and individually.

"Obviously, India are a strong team and in the top ten in the world so it will be tough. We don't get too hung up on individuals though.

"As with any match, it is important that you start quickly and Thursday will, without a doubt, be a fast game. When it comes to the start of the match we will be all ready to go and give a good account of ourselves."

The ex-Dean Park Primary School and George Watson's College pupil added: "The mood in the camp is great. Everyone is delighted to be at the tournament and it's a fantastic opportunity to reach the World Cup, something that the Scotland men have never achieved.

"However, we are here to compete. We have some really dangerous players of our own and are confident we can match the teams here. The key will be to maintain the right intensity in our play throughout the tournament.

"We are not thinking about anything past Thursday. We just want to start well and get better as the tournament progresses."