

Scotland face Malta in must win tie at Hampden Park



Friday night's 3-0 win over Lithuania continued Scotland's rejuvenation as they set their sights on Slovakia who lie within touching distance, four points ahead.

A year ago Scotland defeated Malta 5-1 as the World Cup qualification campaign began and since then the team has had two wins, two losses and two draws.

A home fixture tonight is a must win match for the Scots if they are to qualify for the 2018 World Cup.

Barry Bannan is out of the squad through injury and has returned south. Also not included is Darren Fletcher who didn't travel to Lithuania with a knee injury.

Manager Gordon Strachan said: "We have dragged ourselves out a bad place.

"We could only have done that if we believed in each other and enjoyed working with each other.

"I have a great pride in what I do and I enjoy working with these guys. It's good to see them going away feeling positive after a game.

"Like most club sides, you get a bad spell and I think we've dealt with it like a club side; we've got over it and recovered as a group.

"I think we already know how difficult it is going to be to break Malta down. They are well coached and they take great

pride in playing for their country. Even when they go a goal down they have pride in what they do and they make it very hard for you.”

“If we went with the same side I don’t think anyone would complain.

“If we do change, we must keep the same intensity, the same ability to run with the ball and without the ball. “

Captain Scott Brown said: “We know what we’ve done in the past, we’ve beat the good teams and when everyone expects us to win a game at home as favourites, we’ve kind of struggled.

“We have a very good squad, you look at the bench and there are players who can come on and change games, score goals, create chances and hold the ball up for us as well.

“We’ve gone to Lithuania, dominated possession, chances, and scored three great goals. We were fantastic with the ball, we managed to keep possession and create chances.

“Patience is huge for us, the way we play, keeping the ball and tiring the opponent out.

“Leigh Griffiths up front just now is fantastic, he’s holding the ball in, creating chances for others, running unselfishly off the ball. We’ve got Stuart Armstrong and James (McArthur) running in behind as well.

“It’s about patience and creating chances. Here’s hoping the fans get behind us.”