

Field hockey – Steven vows to do Scotland proud



Scotland men celebrate a goal

Steven McIlravey played in front of a handful of spectators at rain-soaked Peffermill last weekend.

In several weeks time he will appear in front of thousands and a world-wide TV audience in the Commonwealth Games in the Gold Coast.

The 22-year-old player still has to pinch himself about being selected for Scotland's Commonwealth Games field hockey squad more than a week after getting the nod.

But the emerging talent is rated one of the fast rising stars of the sport according to Scottish Hockey bosses.

The catering assistant at a Dundee casino, however, can't believe his luck.

And he is sorry for Glasgow-born, former Edinburgh University

hot-stop David Forrester who is ruled out through a shoulder injury sustained in a closed-doors challenge against England in London only two weeks ago.

McIlravey has come in at the last minute and he is currently working hard on improving his fitness.

And he has not played for the national senior team since making his debut in Prague two years ago.

It's a massive jump from playing in front of a man and his dog in domestic hockey to the full glare of the international spotlight in the Gold Coast.

But the Dundonian is ready for the challenge and the Grove Menzieshill goalkeeper can't wait to get onto the plane to Australia next Wednesday.

He admitted: "Selection was a bit of a shock. I knew there was a possibility, but felt it was an unlikely one.

"I'm heart-broken for Dave (Forrester) and I hope I can do him and the country proud out there."

McIlravey has big game experience at club level and was a member of the team which won the Indoor National League Championship with Grove Menzieshill in 2017.

The Tayside-based player has also come up through the age-group teams, playing for Scotland under-18 and under-21 level and was part of the Scottish team which secured fourth place at the 2016 EuroHockey Trophy.

But the Commonwealth Games is massive in comparison and he said: "I've got a lot of packing to do and a lot of hard work to get through before I leave with the rest of the squad.

"My aim is to make sure I am ready for the job in hand. I've been training with the squad since Prague and been playing at a high standard in European hockey.

“And I believe I will be up for the challenge.”

He said the key was mind-set and added: “I understand that playing in front of a few people in the rain in Scotland will be different from playing in a big stadium in a major tournament in the Gold Coast.”

“That gap, hopefully, I’ll be able to cross and I believe it is all about focusing on the job in hand.”

McIlravey, who said his bosses at the Grosvenor Casino in Dundee had been very supportive, believes Scotland have a talented team.

And sees no reason why the squad can’t achieve a significant result Down Under.

He added: “It will be a real test but we should be up to it as we have quality players in the side.”

Andy Tennant, Scottish Hockey’s head of performance, said: “Everyone at Scottish Hockey is bitterly disappointed for David, our focus will be to support his rehab in order to get him fit and ready for upcoming international events.

“Clearly, this is also a great opportunity for Steven who is one of our brightest up-and-coming goalkeepers.

“We are sure he’ll relish the opportunity to represent his country at the Commonwealth Games.”