

Dark in the spotlight

Emily Dark blasted herself onto the European indoor hockey stage with a sensational performance for Scotland in their series win over Ireland in Belfast last month.

The Tayside-based player who is an RAF Reservist with 603 Squadron, City of Edinburgh, claimed a total of five goals in three games and hit the bar in the final seconds of the decider which meant the sides went to a penalty shootout.

Ice cool Dark (picture credit EuroHockey via Scottish Hockey) slotted home as Scotland prevailed in the shootout to claim the silverware and coach Iain Strachan hopes the squad can reproduce that form in the EuroHockey Championships, Division Two, starting on Friday in Ourense in North-West Spain.

The squad jetted to Spain earlier this week and five of the players who made their Scotland debut indoors in Belfast are in the 12-strong squad.

Heather McEwan will make her international debut in the tournament in Ourense.

Scotland's target is promotion and initially the competition was in two pools but Lithuania withdrew last week and Croatia this week, changing the tournament into a round robin event.

Scotland now play two games every day playing two of the top teams,, Belgium and Switzerland, on the opening day.

Dark, who plays for Edinburgh club Watsonians, said the coaching team are doing their homework on the opposition.

The 21-year-old, who is expected to be Scotland's penalty corner go-to, could be targeted by opposition teams.

That, however, does not trouble the final year physics student at St Andrews University who has recently switched from the

forward line to a defensive beat.

That, she said, suited her style of play and the Newburgh, Fife-based student said: "There is a club feel about the squad as it is like a group of friends getting together for training and games.

"I've played with several of the girls at Dundee Wanderers and now at Watsonians and I also know other girls well from playing against them in club games.

"The coaching team are sourcing information about the opposition and we'll be able to view video of the opposition when we get there.

"Belgium are hosting the World Cup just after the European event so they will be well-prepared. We played in Ireland recently and that was a good experience for us.

"COVID-19 restrictions meant we could not play against club teams in Scotland, but we have trained well and we travel with optimism."

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