

Coach Duncan seeks improved performance from Scotland

Scotland came into their opening clash with the Great Britain Development Squad at Peffermill in Edinburgh on a roll having won five games in a row against Wales and Ireland.

Yes, the Tartan Hearts extended their unbeaten run in this uncapped match, but should know within themselves that this was not one of their better days.

Understandably, coach Chris Duncan called them together for a huddle at the end of the 60 minutes. He did not need to articulate his thoughts as his face spoke volumes.

The eventual scoreline was 2-2, Scotland having gone ahead twice only to be pegged back by an industrious visiting team who pressed the home side throughout a match played in a strong wind and, at one point, driving rain. The visitors deserve great credit for their application and work rate.

In 17-year-old Anna Edwards they have a raw striker with bags of potential. Indeed, she won the penalty corner from which the Development Squad levelled the game late on.

Undoubtedly, Scotland had a number of chances which they failed to take, shooting wide of the goal on several occasions when in good position.

However, in 46 days the Commonwealth Games open and Scotland play South Africa, ranked No 16 in the world, in their opening match on Friday, July 29, in the Commonwealth in Birmingham.

They also face New Zealand, rated No 9, on July 30, and Kenya rated No 36 in August 1 and finish their pool games against Australia, rated No 3 on the planet, on August 3. Scotland are 18th.

Chances can't be squandered when you play against sides at international level, and certainly not against teams in the world's top ten.

The facts are that Louise Campbell (pictured in blue by **Nigel Duncan** fighting for the ball in midfield) failed with one a one-on-one early on before Great Britain defender Amy Costello opened the scoring in the second quarter following a penalty corner. Liv Hamilton levelled two minutes from end of the second quarter making the scoreline 1-1 at the mid-point, a half in which the visitors showed they were prepared to take the game to their hosts.

Quicksilver Sarah Jamieson then engineered two scoring chances on the left after leaving a number of defenders in her wake with trademark runs, and Katie Robertson fired wide before Fiona Burnet picked up a loose ball at the top of the D and fired home with just over seven minutes left.

There were too many misplaced passes and turnovers and that allowed the Development girls, who also hit a post, to keep on coming forward and they were rewarded when Becky Manton netted from a penalty corner with just over two minutes remaining.

They deserved their draw in a scrappy performance by the home side in which they started slowly, turned the ball over and looked generally out of sorts. Better to be out of sorts now when they have time to correct the flaws before they get to Birmingham.

And they have a chance to bounce back when they play the Development Squad at Peffermill again on Sunday, June 12 (12.30pm). Admission is free.