

Duncan will ask for action replay against determined Czech Republic

Scotland women's hockey coach Chris Duncan was looking for an emphatic win over the Czech Republic in Saturday's challenge and his squad delivered with some style.

Amy Costello claimed a double with Fiona Burnet and Jess Ross adding singles in the 4-0 victory ahead of their Test match against the same opposition at Peffermill on Sunday (push off 12.30), their last home game before the EuroHockey Championships in Germany in August.

However, the visitors, ranked No 23 in the world, six places below the Tartan Hearts, provided a test, particularly in the early stages, and Scotland goalkeeper Amy Gibson had to produce two world-class stops to prevent them going ahead.

Earlier, both sides started tentatively but, with time running out in the opening session, Scotland, with their Great Britain squad players restored to the squad, started to find their rhythm.

Edinburgh University striker Lunjika Nyirenda and Bronwyn Shields (Clydesdale Western) came close to finding the net and the home side carried that confidence into the second quarter.

The home side controlled a large share of the early possession, creating chances, and Costello almost broke the

deadlock from a penalty corner, the former Edinburgh University star firing inches wide of the left upright.

Nyirenda, who has been in fine goal-scoring form for the students, came close, this time controlling a pass into the circle and, with her back to goal, firing the ball towards goal on the half turn.

Czech Republic goalkeeper, Barbora Cechakova, was in the right place at the right time on this occasion and she denied Costello from a penalty corner as the hosts upped the pressure.

Finally, early in the third quarter, Scotland broke through following a flurry of chances, Costello firing home and the home side, cheered on by their passionate fans, forced another fine save from Cechakova, this time from close range.

Costello, who was a constant threat, then doubled the lead as she bulged the net again from a penalty corner, but the visitors did not quit and came close to pulling a goal back, Natalie Novakova latching onto a loose ball and her reserve stick effort forced Scotland's other goalkeeper, Jess Buchanan, into action.

However, the home side calmed fans nerves when they claimed No 3 in the final session when Burnet was quickest to react to a rebound from a Sophie Hinds shot.

A fourth arrived as Jess Ross converted another rebound following a Nyirenda penalty corner effort and Duncan will review the game tape overnight and will undoubtedly ask for a similar effort from his squad to maintain momentum with major challenges ahead this summer.

PICTURE: Amy Costello (yellow bib) tackled by Jess Ross in Scotland training. Picture by **Nigel Duncan**