

Scotland hockey women in Auld Enemy double-header

Scotland women ramp-up their preparation for the EuroHockey Championships in Germany next month (August) with a double-header against England at Bisham Abbey next Sunday and Monday.

The Tartan Hearts, ranked No 17 in the world, go in against a side rated No 6 on the planet, but head coach, Chris Duncan, is relishing the opportunity of playing quality opposition in their Euro build-up.

The game follows recent jousts with Australia, ranked No 2, and China, rated No 11, and Duncan wants to play top ranked side as they face fierce competition in the Euros in Monchengladbach from August 18 to 25.

There they face Germany, ranked No 5, Ireland rated No 13 and England in Pool A with The Netherlands, ranked No 1, Belgium, rated No 4, Italy rated No 18 and Spain, ranked No 7 in Pool B.

Duncan (pictured at Peffermill) said England telephoned the Scots requesting the games, an indication that the standing of the Tartan Hearts is rising on the world stage, and the Scots travel on the back of two 4-0 wins over the Czech Republic at Peffermill in Edinburgh last weekend, internationals in which defender Katie Birch (Durham University) and Sophie Hinds (The University of Edinburgh) both gained their first Test caps for

Scotland. Hinds scored on her Test debut to complete a red letter day.

The Edinburgh-based coach said: "Both Sophie and Katie played really well and it was a satisfying weekend. Yes, it is nice to win two games in two days with 4-0 scorelines, and that is something to be pleased about.

"It was also pleasing to re-introduce players who have been missing through injury and have our Great Britain squad players back into the set-up. It was also good to see that our defensive set-up was working.

"Also, it is nice to score goals, but we must make sure that we are efficient in defense and it was good to note that we had lots of penetrations into the circle and we were clinical when chances came.

"Remember, top ten teams drive and create tempt in games and this is something we must get used to."

Duncan looked forward to the Euros and added: "Every game there (in Germany) is a catchweight contest for us as we're dealing with players at world-level, who are professionals, and our girls have to fit hockey in around their careers, but there can be no excuses and we want to be competitive in Germany. We are going out there to compete and win games."