

Scotland hockey's eightsome has Czech Republic reeling

Scotland posted back-to-back 4-0 weekend wins over the Czech Republic in Edinburgh as the squad builds towards the EuroHockey Championships next month (August) in Germany.

Blanking the opposition was particularly pleasing for the Edinburgh-based coach who now takes the squad to France for a triple-header before moving on to Monchengladbach for the Euros which start on August 18 and finish on August 25.

Czech Republic are ranked No 23 in the world and Scotland are 17, but the margin of the win and the performances auger well, but more severe tests await the Tartan Hearts with the might of Germany, ranked No 5 in the world, their first opponents in Pool A of the high-quality Euro event.

Ireland, ranked No 13, are next on the agenda in Germany followed by England, ranked No 6, in their final pool game, and the Scotland squad are under no illusions that it will be a tough assignment.

For the record, Pool B features The Netherlands, ranked No 1 in the world, Belgium, ranked No 4, Italy, rated No 18 and Spain, ranked No 7, but Scotland can currently enjoy their 8-0 shutout over the Czech Republic who proved dogged opponents in the two games and the margins could have been greater but for excellent work from the Czech Republic goalkeepers.

Saturday's win featured a double from Surbiton star Amy Costello plus singles from Fiona Burnet (pictured in blue strip), who plays for Wimbledon, and Jess Ross (Edinburgh University), and Sunday's victory saw four players find the net.

Burnet opened the scoring when she produced a lovely finish into the roof of the net after fine running down the left by Sarah Jamieson and Charlotte Watson, with Watson providing the assist.

The home side undoubtedly controlled the opening quarter and looked a constant threat through the running of Jamieson and Watson, while the midfield and defence made good connections pushing forward.

The pressure continued into the second quarter and only a great save from the Czech Republic goalkeeper denied Scotland a second but the home side, playing their final home game before the Euros, maintained their momentum and Katie Robertson (Edinburgh University) was denied by a double save as the Scots pressed for another goal.

Scotland did not let their opponents off the hook, driving forward at the start of the second-half, and Costello was denied from a drag flick and her Great Britain squad colleague Jenny Eadie cracked a low shot against the leg guards of the busy goalkeeper.

The second goal eventually arrived from the stick of Germany-based Laura Swanson, deflecting the ball home following a penalty corner routine and in the final quarter Scotland went 3-0 ahead from a close range finish by Sophie Hinds (Edinburgh University), earning her first Scotland cap, after a slick exchange on the right of the circle.

Vice-captain Katie Robertson then swept the ball home to make it 4-0 and completed in an excellent weekend and send the fans home happy from Peffermill.