

Duncan hails team after narrow win over Spain

Scotland's women celebrated at the final whistle after their historic win over Spain, in their final game in the EuroHockey Championship in Germany.

The knot of flag-carrying fans in the stand were also ecstatic after the 2-1 success which had drama, incident and pure theatre and showed that this squad have what it takes to mix it with teams in the top ten in the world.

Spain are a quality side and sat at No 8 in the rankings before the defeat. Scotland were No 19 but will earn valuable ranking points and they earned every one of them by grit and dogged determination, plus some real skill.

The squad dug deep after opening with a 4-0 defeat by hosts Germany, they lost 5-0 to England and Ireland, before drawing 1-1 with Italy in a game Duncan said they dominated.

Coach Chris Duncan said this tournament was the start of a journey which he hopes can propel the squad into the top ten in the world.

The coach and the squad are aiming high and the success in Monchengladbach was, said Duncan, a statement to the rest of the hockey world that Scotland are on the rise.

He said: "It has always been our ambition to show teams in the top ten that we can compete with them, but the result against Spain is bitter sweet to be honest as we are disappointed at

how we performed in some of the earlier games.”

For example, the Edinburgh-based coach said: “We drew against Italy in a game we should have won, but this result (against Spain) is a statement from us to the world of hockey about what we are all about. It is also about development, and it is all about improving.

“I was so proud of the girls in how we started the game. Spain are a quality side and we had to be creative and smart in the way we defended and we took our chance with the penalty corner goal.

“We stuck so resolutely to the plan and we always knew that the Spanish side would take their chances and to be able to see the game out after they scored was brilliant.”

Edinburgh-raised Amy Costello, a member of the Great Britain squad, shone in the game, sweeping up at the back, initiating attacks and proving a real asset with her penalty corner strike, and Duncan added: “That is what happens with world-class players, they perform when it really matters and the chips are down and we have been so lucky having Amy in our programme,”

Goalkeeper Amy Gibson was another who stood out, topping a quality performance with a penalty stroke save late in the game with the scoreline at 2-1.

Duncan said: “Amy also made a number of other other saves, but this is not about individuals. This was a whole team effort and the crowd in Monchengladbach, and those watching on television, saw what we are all about.

“However, this hockey game is not just about attacking, it is about what you do in moments all. We had, for example, a line save from Katie Birch and all over the pitch there were just moments. When you put that together you get a result.

“We got one here against one of the world’s top ten sides and we have not done that for a very, very long time.”

Historians say that it is Scotland’s best result against a top ten side for three decades and their first win over Spain for eight years and the game-winning goal came from a pass on the turn from inside Scotland’s half from The University of Edinburgh player, Eve Pearson, which was beautifully tucked away by Dundee-born Charlotte Watson.

Duncan added: “Charlotte ran and ran for us out there. She was hurt near the end and is a little sore now but, overall, this is a moment to savour.”

He said: “Coaches are never happy. We have four points from a possible six in our Pool C games but, if we had put that performance on against Italy on Thursday in our first Pool C game, then it could have been six points.

“Yes, we are obviously frustrated by that, but I think that on Friday, after a tough tournament, after a tough ten-month programme, was brilliant and win over Spain gives us useful ranking points. This is the start of the journey. We have to build on this and move forward.”

PICTURE: Courtesy of ***WorldSportPics*** and EuroHockey