

Duncan up-beat ahead of key clash with Ireland

Scotland face Ireland in a crunch clash in Pool B in the EuroHockey Championships, A Division, in Monchengladbach on Saturday night and coach Chris Duncan remains up-beat despite a 4-0 defeat in their opener against a clinical German combine.

They are No 4 in the world and proved it with a powerful performance against the Tartan Hearts who are ranked No 18, but Scotland did have chances and they took the game to the hosts in the final two quarters earning praise from local commentators for sticking to their beliefs.

Scotland lost a goal at a penalty corner after less than 20 seconds, Sonja Zimmerman firing low past Amy Gibson from the top of the circle and they surrendered a second following a flowing move down the right near half-time, Lisa Nolte providing the finishing touch.

No 3 arrived after a penalty corner was awarded two seconds from the end of the second quarter and Zimmerman made no mistake drilling the ball home low.

They added a fourth when Charlotte Stapenhorst netted late on but Edinburgh-based Duncan said: "I was proud of the girls."

The goal coming early upset pre-game plans and the third after the buzzer in the first-half was a real blow, and it could have been five had Amy Gibson not pulled off a flying save late-on, but Duncan said: "Yes, it was tough, but we took the game to them and we made chances.

"They are a powerful and physical, world-class side who are well organised and clinical in their approach. That is why they are No 4 in the world, but we are still work in process

and that was another learning experience for our girls.”

He added: “It was real bravery to play how we did against such a high quality team, but that’s what we’re all about. We’re a forward thinking attacking team, and we definitely showed that. Tiny details exposed us, but we caused problems, and we rattled them at times.

“We didn’t go into our shells, and we asked questions of them. We created chances, but just need to learn the details that punished us.

“We’re into tournament now, and we’re ready to go for the next game, and looking forward to the match against Ireland.”

Meanwhile, England strolled to a 3-0 win over Ireland in the opening game of the women’s EuroHockey Championship in Mönchengladbach.

Ireland started well in this Pool B clash, creating several chances but failed to cash in and England won a penalty stroke in the eighth minute when Alex Malzer’s progress was impeded close in. Grace Balsdon scored.

Tessa Howard made it 2-0 with a deflection to a shot from Holly Hunt before half-time and Hannah Martin made it 3-0 in the 48th minute after another Hunt shot.

Malzer, the Player of the Match, said: “Honestly, we are so happy. We didn’t start the way we wanted but then we got momentum and 3-0 in our first game is so good.”

She added: “We stuck to our processes, didn’t change anything and I knew we could win.”