

Howard treble sinks battling Scots

England star Tessa Howard claimed a glory treble as Scotland women slipped to their third straight defeat in Pool B of the EuroHockey Championships, A Division, in Monchengladbach, Germany, and they now enter crucial crossover ties.

Grace Balsdon claimed two penalty corner goals as England's physical approach and clinical finishing overpowered the Tartan Hearts who were only able to mount sporadic attacks and rarely put any pressure on the tough English rearguard.

The Scots competed in the opening quarter which was blanked but, as the heat intensified, and the powerful English women got into gear there was only going to be one outcome.

Howard opened their account, finishing coolly on a breakaway, a minute into the second quarter and it was 2-0 when Hannah Martin drew a penalty corner and Balsdon did the rest after 29 minutes.

Jess Buchanan replaced Amy Gibson in Scotland's goal, a usual ploy by the coaching staff to use both goalkeepers, and she was soon in the thick of the action as England bore down on the Scotland defense.

They survived a two-minute penalty handed to Bronwyn Shields but Scotland went 3-0 behind after 44 minutes, Balsdon

converting from a penalty corner, firing the ball to Buchanan's right low and at real pace.

Scotland forced their one and only penalty corner early in the final session but the switch tactic called did not trouble England who moved forward relentlessly in search of more.

No 4 arrived when Howard latched onto a ball on the right hand side of the Scotland D and fired a rocket shot past Buchanan with eight minutes remaining and the Scottish goalkeeper did not have a hope.

The fifth arrived with less than four minutes left when Howard deflected the ball home for her third and England's fifth.

It could be Italy in the first over ties to see who stays in the elite division and coach Chris Duncan said: "England were more physical than us to be honest and we were not able to compete for the whole 60 minutes. The reality from today is that we have to match that to be able to compete at this level."

He added that the Scots did not manage to disrupt the English possession enough and said: "When we got the ball we were not able to consolidate."

PICTURE: Scotland fans in the stands at Monchengladbach.
Picture from ***Fritz Volt***