

Scotland face 'cup final' with Spain

Coach Chris Duncan told his Scotland women's team ahead of their game against Spain on Friday (13.45) in the EuroHockey Championships, A Division: "This is our cup final."

Scotland drew 1-1 with Italy in their first Pool C clash and Duncan said they had everything apart from the goals. He added: "Performance wise, I thought we came out of the blocks firing and we caused them a lot of problems.

"We could have done more with that possession, but the way they play, they tried to catch us off guard and it was frustrating because that is one we feel like we did not get a result for the performance we put on.

"That is tough to take, but we are off the mark (in the competition). I spoke to the girls about there being two tournament here, the Pool B games and now games against Italy and Spain in Pool C to determine our final placing in the event."

Spain are ranked No 8 in the world and Scotland are No 19 and the coach said: "Now we get a chance to take down a top ten side in Spain and they will want to play hockey which is good for us. We have the belief that we can compete and you never know.

"We have instilled a mind-set into the players that we want to

win and we are definitely hurting that we have not come away without a win (against Italy). We feel we created enough.

“There is disappointment and dejection in the changing room as the girls want to win. That is really pleasing as a coach because they have not achieved what they want to achieve.

“My job is to search for the positives and today in terms of character, coming back from a goal down is tough, and we were able to keep creating until the final moments, but we did not get the win we wanted. We were so keen to get those three points to put a smile on the girls faces. We are disappointed.”

He added: “We were utterly dominant apart from a couple of moments and the goal (they scored) was hard to take. They feed off scraps, we knew that, and they took the chance.

“We came back, got back on the front foot and scored a nice corner and made a nice corner move near the end. Their runner just got a touch otherwise we may have been in. It is a game of inches and we just did not get those inches.

“There was however a hugely improved performance and our ambition in this tournament was to showcase what we can be. We played beautifully against Germany and we were disappointed at our performances against Ireland and England.”

He agreed that if the game had been a boxing match the referee could have stepped in to call a halt, but Duncan said: “We were do dominant in quarter one and won so much ball.

“They reverted to overheads and smashing long balls to find a way out. That is sport and we did not get the scoreboard pressure which we needed.”

Duncan said the Italian goalkeeper, Lucia Caruso, was “excellent” and added: “She is unorthodox. Seldom will a Goalkeeper of the Tournament go to one of the lesser teams,

but she has kept her team in the game so many times and she did that today. She is tough to find spaces against and she keeps her side alive.”

Looking at Friday’s clash, Duncan said: “We are looking for an action replay (of the form against Italy) against Spain and we have got more gears. We were forced to play a bit slower in our high build today, but Spain will want to come and get us.

“If they want to play a fast game we will play a fast game. The girls did themselves proud today performance wise but this is one game. This is our cup final. We have to go other there and take down a top side.”

PICTURE: Bronwyn Shields (right) closes in on an Italian player. Picture by **WorldSportPics** courtesy of EuroHockey