

Scots sent homeward to think again

Sport can be brutal. Irish eyes were smiling as the Green Machine celebrated after their convincing 5-0 victory over Scotland in a key game in the EuroHockey A Division in Monchengladbach.

Only yards away the dejected Tartan Hearts were left to contemplate what could be described as a bad day at the office.

Ireland stood shoulder to shoulder, to pinch a line from their bouncy National Anthem, and certainly sent Scotland home to think again.

And this result came only hours after a solid display by the Scots against Germany in their opening game. Yes, they lost 4-0 but to a side who are No 4 in the world. Scotland are No 18.

Parents clustered together high in the stand came down to pitchside to put a supportive arm round the the dejected players, and they needed consoling after a display against the world's No 13 ranked country, which was difficult to watch at times.

Had Scotland struck early, and captain Katie Robertson made ground down the right before sending the ball across goal, but

it failed to find a Tartan stick, things just might have been different.

Sarah Jamieson then fired a shot on the turn which thudded against the Irish goalkeepers pads and then finished just inches wide.

Was that a sign of things to come? Sadly not, this was Ireland's Cup Final and they attacked it with the throttle full on.

Scotland goalkeeper Amy Gibson had to race from goal to block, sending the ball inches wide, and Scotland were living dangerously.

The highly-physical Irish side powered forward, beating the Scots for pace, and hemming the Tartan team in their own half . They tore down both flanks before cutting the ball back for their team-mates. More of this was to come later when they were rewarded.

The sides were, however, deadlocked at 0-0 after the first quarter but two goals in one heartbreaking, second quarter minute had the Irish on the front foot and they did not let go.

Scotland had a player under penalty and the Irish side made it count, unlocking the door after a driven ball into the circle was sunk into the bottom right corner by Hannah McLoughlin. Time 19 minutes.

Ellen Curran then counted after an attack down the right, a drive to the line and a cut back. Time 20 minutes and waves upon wave of Irish attacks put the Scottish goal under severe pressure, and the Tartan Hearts did not seem to be able to find a way out of the Irish straight jacket.

Goalkeeper Jess Buchanan halted Ireland's charge with a fine save but a third seemed inevitable and a quick counter allowed

Niamh Carey to run in and coolly send the ball into the bottom right corner from the top of the D. A quality finish on 26 minutes.

At the other end, Heather McEwan had a chance for Scotland in the third quarter but her deflection hit the side netting and Ireland continued to press aggressively.

Ellie Wilson hooked the ball to safety and Buchanan made a tremendous double stop early in the final quarter as Ireland, like a rabid dog, refused to let go and their fourth was scrambled home by Sarah Torrans after 55 minutes.

The same player had the ball in the net again from a quick counter to put them 5-0 ahead in the final minute and, thankfully, the final whistle came to end this contest which was so vital for survival among the elite of European hockey.

Scotland have until Tuesday to lick their wounds, and they are severe, and next up are England, ranked No 6 in the world on Tuesday (12.30). The knot of Saltire waving fans would love nothing better than an uplifting performance so they can enjoy their late lunch.

Earlier, Wales men came from 3-1 down to level at 3-3 with Germany and silence a 9,000-capacity crowd and the Dutch produced a masterclass of precision hockey at pace with a 6-0 victory over France.