

Blaikie boost for The University of Edinburgh

New-look The University of Edinburgh push off their new women's Premiership hockey campaign at home to Glasgow University on Saturday and one of the newcomers is Ruth Blaikie.

The Perthside-raised player has established herself in the Scottish senior women's squad and makes a switch from Europe back to nearer home this season, a move which has been a bonus for the students' coach, Sam Judge.

Blaikie played with Dutch club AMVJ based in Amstelveen while studying liberal arts and sciences in The Netherlands, and The University of Edinburgh hope to mount a strong challenge to arch Capital rivals Watsonians who won the Grand Slam last season.

The 22-year-old player is a welcome addition for Judge who has suffered the loss of four regulars, two of them from the critical midfield department.

Katie Robertson, Scotland's captain in the EuroHockey Championships, A Division, in Monchengladbach, following the absence through injury of Olympic bronze medallist, Sarah Robertson, has left, and the 26-year-old is set to join a leading English club.

So has Eve Pearson, the 21-year-old midfielder who provided the killer pass to Great Britain squad member, Charlotte

Watson, in the EuroHockey Championships in Germany when gutsy Scotland earned a historic 2-1 win over Spain in their final fixture, is moving abroad to an as yet undisclosed club.

That left 45-year-old Judge's midfield thin before the signature of Blaikie and the coach has also lost Georgia Jones and talented goalkeeper, Amber Murray, who were around the squad in the build-up to the EuroHockey Championships.

Last season, the students pushed treble winners, Watsonians, hard for honours and Judge is keen to see a changing of the guard this season.

The Paisley-born coach, who made 199 appearances for the international side, said: "Ruth joining is good and we have Ava Smith back from injury which is also a plus. We have a lot of first year students coming in so I am not sure of my squad. It currently sits at 25."

The University of Edinburgh Hall of Famer, who is director of hockey at George Watson's College, and head of performance for women's hockey at The University of Edinburgh, where she graduated in sports science.

PICTURE: The Scotland squad in Monchengladbach with Ruth Blaikie fourth from the right in the back row. Picture by ***Nigel Duncan***