

Coach Hadfield and Grange rewarded

Sean Hadfield's voice boomed across the pitch, urging his Grange Edinburgh Ladies squad to give of their best against silverware-chasing The University of Edinburgh.

The former Scotland goalkeeper was rewarded. Not completely, as the students levelled late-on, but Hadfield must have been pleased with the effort, application and attitude of his team who showed great determination and resilience in tough conditions.

They certainly competed with one of the fancied teams in the 12-strong division during the first quarter, a highly-entertaining session where play went from end-to-end.

Their endeavour produced a goal to break the deadlock, Heather Croll profiting from a loose ball close-in. She prodded home as the rain began to trickle from the sky.

Thankfully, there was little wind and the mild temperature, around 12c, was a bonus for the knot of spectators drawn to Friday night's game at Fettes.

Coach Sam Judge obviously had words with her troops during the first break, and they stepped-up their tempo. Hadfield continued to bark orders from the touchline and his charges responded.

They defended strongly, allowing the students few chances and, when they did break through, goalkeeper Iona Colquhoun produced, her long legs saving the day on at least one occasion.

The home side still led at the break as The University of Edinburgh side worked hard to open their account. Grange struggled to get the ball out of their half as the students pressed, and turnovers brought even more pressure back on their rearguard.

However, they held on and on. The inevitable happened. Jika Nyirenda, who is striving to make herself a fixture in the Scotland squad, and a prolific striker last season, picked up a ball, turned and sent it goalwards. The thud of it hitting the backboard signalled that the sides were level.

Judge's squad mounted wave upon wave of attacks on Grange who were rarely seen in the opposition half, apart from a solo break from Hanna McKie, but they gritted their teeth as the rain hammered down and they held out for a confidence-boosting draw, but not before having a few scares.

Indeed, as the clock ticked into the final minutes they had to endure a penalty stroke, which was sent wide, and repel three penalty corners. The shriek of delight at the hard-earned draw spoke volumes.

This was not the result that Judge wanted as the students bid to keep pace with Capital rivals Watsonians in the title chase but it will be a massive boost to the moral of Grange who have won two and drawn two of their five games securing them in the top half of the table.

The students, who boast several members of the Scotland squad, have had a patchy start to their season with two wins, two draws and a defeat in league play.

Elsewhere, Western Wildcats scored a goal in each half to earn

a 2-0 victory over Glasgow rivals Clydesdale Western at Auchenhowie and the Man of the Match award went to Fallon Thomson for a clean sheet in her Premiership debut.

PICTUE: Jika Nyirenda, who scored for The University of Edinburgh, pictured taking on water playing for Scotland against England under-21 earlier this week in Glasgow. Picture by ***Nigel Duncan***