

Wadsworth stands out as Scots edge England under-21

Scotland, with a number of young players in their hockey squad, left it late but they finally saw off a dogged and talented England under-21 combine in an entertaining challenge clash at the well-appointed Uddingston Cricket and Sports Club.

The Tartan Hearts won 3-1 but this game and a return at Glasgow's National Hockey Centre on Monday (push-off 6.30pm) is all about giving young talent a platform to perform in a competitive situation.

Scotland's head coach, Chris Duncan, will have taken note of the performances of two emerging players, Ava Wadsworth, who looked at home in the side, and Connie Roxburgh. They impressed.

The Scots, fresh from their performance in finishing seven in the EuroHockey Championships, Group A, in Germany, certainly started on the front foot, forcing a penalty corner in the first minute.

Evie Wood, England's goalkeeper, made a good stop but she could do nothing to prevent the home side moving ahead soon after. Millie Steiger, one of Scotland's more experienced players on show on the night, picked up the ball inside the

opposition half and drove through the England defence before laying it off to stand-in captain, Sarah Jamieson, who shot first time.

Scotland then enjoyed most of possession, with the heavily-involved Wadsworth showing calmness of the ball and vision on the pass, but home goalkeeper Jess Buchanan had to make a quality pad save when a ball arrived through traffic on an England breakaway.

The visitors, who had travelled up by car and train during the day, dug in and enjoyed more possession in the second quarter, showing speed on their breaks.

Scotland, however, had a great chance to move further ahead when Watsonians star Jamieson collected the ball and dropped her shoulder as she ran in on goal, but goalkeeper Wood, a geology student at the University of Birmingham, saved low down.

The scoreline stayed the same until the break but then another of the Watsonian players who won the domestic championship last season, Emily Dark, was twice denied by England's other goalkeeper, Izzy Field, both good stops under real pressure on penalty corners.

England upped their tempo and pressure forced the Scots to concede a penalty stroke, awarded after a breakaway in which the England side had a three-on-one advantage in the build-up. Beth Alexander clinically dispatched the ball low into the net on the goalkeeper's left-hand side.

At the other end, busy Field then denied Scotland's emerging talent, striker Jika Nyirenda, who plays for The University of Edinburgh, but England broke upfield and Scotland's other goalkeeper, Amber Murray, had to dive to parry an England shot to safety.

The scoreline was deadlocked until Scotland forced back-to-

back penalty corners. On the second, Frances Lonergan fired towards goal from the top of the circle. Goalkeeper Field got a piece of the ball, but not enough to stop it slipping over the line for 2-1.

Scotland suffered several scares as counter-attacking England forced the play late on looking for a leveller, but Georgia Jones was left unmarked at the far post to deflect the ball home and Scotland held out to secure the win.

PICTURE: Sarah Jamieson on duty for Scotland.