

Spanish lesson for young Scots hockey squad

Scotland coach Chris Duncan preferred to accentuate the positives despite the senior women losing their first game of a triple-header against Olympic-bound Spain.

The Tartan Hearts, minus their Great Britain squad players, were beaten 5-0 by Spain, ranked No 7 in the world, in Benalmadena but Duncan said: "Despite the score, there were so many positives from this game.

"In the context of both programmes, where Spain have done lots of prep and come off the back of an Olympic qualifier, and we're playing our first game with a lot of new, and young, players, we did a lot of things well.

"We were good at winning the ball, but naive when we won it, but that will improve as the games go on."

The Edinburgh-based playcaller added: "It was our first outing against a very good side, and a baptism of fire for the players getting their first taste of senior international hockey.

"The young players did well, and this is a great learning experience for them. We're definitely a little under-cooked to play a first game at this level, but you could see us getting used to the pace as we got into the second-half. We're looking forward to building on this performance in the games ahead."

Scotland lost a goal in the opening quarter through a penalty corner strike and Spain doubled their lead in the second quarter, taking advantage of a turnover to gain ground into the Scotland circle.

A second penalty corner strike after half time saw Spain go 3-0 ahead, but Belgian-based Heather McEwan came close with a shot across goal that zipped just wide.

Georgia Jones, who plays in Germany, did some great work on the baseline, but no sticks could connect with her pass across goal.

At the other end of the pitch, Katie Birch looked strong at full-back and Jess Ross showed well defensively and provided a ball-carrying threat.

In the final corner, another penalty corner strike, and a goal from open play saw the hosts record a 5-0 win and the sides meet again on Wednesday in the second game.

PICTURE: Chris Duncan holds a team talk. Picture ***Nigel Duncan***