

Scotland women 'belong' at the summit of Euro hockey

Chris Duncan admitted it has been a long year preparing for the EuroHockey qualifiers, but Scotland secured a place among the elite of European hockey with a narrow 2-1 victory over Wales in Glasgow.

The Edinburgh-based coach said the final whistle brought a sense of relief and he praised the entire team and staff for the victory which followed only 24 after their 1-0 win over a stuffy Austrian side at the same venue.

He said: "Two games in 24 hours was a lot of pressure. I thought the girls and the staff managed it brilliantly. We were frustrated in the 1-0 win over Austria by a side with a game plan, but we did a thoroughly professional job against Wales and it is nice to be back at the summit of European hockey which is where I believe we belong."

Scotland went 1-0 down to Wales in 18 minutes when a penalty stroke was awarded against them but levelled a minute later through a brilliant Sarah Jamieson reverse stick shot, the goal set-up by Dundee-born Charlotte Watson.

Duncan said: "That shows the character in this squad. Nothing changed (after we went 1-0 down), we were calm and composed and that Welsh goal almost forced us onto the front foot.

"I thought our first goal was absolutely brilliant and it was a game changer for us, but we were threatening. Charlotte

Watson was phenomenal for us (against Wales). She is a constant threat and she embodies how we want to play, but it was not just her.

“Katie Robertson and Sarah Robertson were similar in the balls they won, but I am really proud of them all. This was a massive team effort and I thought they all stepped-up on a really tense occasion.”

Duncan added: “As soon as we got to 1-1 I thought we were in charge. The second-half they changed a couple of things tactically, but I thought we had answers and when it was 2-1 we were really content towards the back end.”

Jess Buchanan, Scotland’s new No 1 goalkeeper, produced some quality stops when needed and Duncan said: “She is phenomenal. This is the first time she has played a tournament in which she has started as No 1 goalkeeper for us and she is going to be special.

“She made two brilliant decisions to come out to the ball and she kept us in the game. Some of the work you don’t see is her work in organisation and that is sensational.”

Duncan coached the squad in A Division on their last visit to the highest echelon in 2023 and he added: “It is tough, but it give us something to keep working on. We have just started and we have a long way to go until we get there. To have these challenges to plan for is a positive.

“We don’t want to go and just have the experience, we want to go to Germany and we want to compete and we want to beat top teams and we want more.”

PICTURE: Scotland captain Sarah Robertson is presented with a gold medal in Glasgow. Picture ***Nigel Duncan***



