

Wimbledon tough test for Western in Europe

Western Wildcats carry Scotland's hopes in the EuroHockey League (EHL) this weekend when the Glasgow side, who currently top the domestic Premiership, square-up to London-based Wimbledon in Surbiton.

The Auchenhowie squad are competing in their third successive EHL campaign having earned a ninth place finish overall in Barcelona a year ago with their win over TJ Plzen-Litice.

Former player, Vishal Marwaha, once a member of the Great Britain squad, has returned as head coach for his second stint with the club and he has added some strong players to the line-up.

Scottish international Jamie Golden has joined the club after a two-year spell with host club Surbiton, where he won EHL bronze in 2022, and then a year with Hamburger Polo Club in Germany.

His fellow Bluestick – nickname for Scotland men's hockey team – Tommy Austin joins from Kelburne and they were in the Scotland squad during the summer with AJ Lochrin, Andrew McAllister and Fraser Moran.

Captain Rob Harwood has taken a sabbatical from playing for Scotland to focus on his career in the US Sports Scholarship industry. He also has international experience having played in 2018 and 2022 Commonwealth Games. In Birmingham in 2022 he

played alongside Golden.

Evergreen goalkeeper Gavin Sommerville is one of the EHL originals, playing in the first season back in 2007/08 with Kelburne, and a newcomer is Simon Wells who has played for Australia at youth level and, more recently, for Adelaide Fire in Hockey One league.

Cameron Moran and Rohan Marwaha, a nephew of coach Vishal, are young players who both played for Scotland at under-21 and under-18 level respectively and Dutch teenager Just Noordzij has joined the club as he is studying in Scotland.

They face a tough test against much-changed Wimbledon on Saturday, October 5 (15.15) in Game 11. They warmed-up, pre-season, against top European clubs in Germany.

Coach is Karl Stango and the Londonders include Liam Ansell who has rejoined the club after a season with Amsterdam in the Hoofdklasse. He has 70 caps for Great Britain and England and Welsh international, Fred Newbold, is a former Great Britain under-21 captain.

Scottish international Joe McConnell, a former Western player, has joined from Teddington and Sam McCulloch has been signed from Western Australian hockey.

Harwood (pictured) said Wimbledon will be well supported but a number of the Glasgow side's family are making the trip south to cheer them on. He added: "The squad is in a brilliant position and in terms of preparation this is probably the best we have had.

"We have a full squad available for selection. In the last few years we have had injuries to key players which made it really difficult for us to compete at this level.

"We are expecting a really tough game and the squad's confidence is high that we can go there and give them a game.

We hope to get a result and we would love to emulate last year's result against Plzen.

"The Scottish league is looked down upon and this is a great opportunity for us to represent Scotland and our domestic game on such a big stage against quality opposition. We hope to do ourselves justice."