

Scotland name three captains for Nations Cup

Olympian Amy Costello, who plays club hockey in The Netherlands and is due to make her 150th combined appearance for Scotland and Great Britain in the FIH Nations Cup in Santiago, Chile, from February 23 to March 2, has been named as one of three captains by Scotland.

The others are Millie Steiger and Sarah Jamieson and they take over as Olympic bronze medalist, Sarah Robertson, is unavailable for the tournament where Scotland play Ireland, New Zealand and South Korea in Pool B. The other qualifying pool features Canada, hosts Chile, Japan and USA.

Twins Rebecca and Katie Birch, who were brought up in York, also feature as does newcomer Ava Findlay (The University of Edinburgh). She is set to receive her first cap in South America.

Edinburgh-based Chris Duncan, the head coach, said: "Preparing for such a major tournament at this time of year has certainly brought its challenges, but the players' commitment to the task has been so admirable.

"Their dedication through the winter, and their commitment to training in the early part of January to be in the best position to compete come the Nations Cup, has been exceptional."

He added: "We have been so pleased by the development of so many of our squad over the past two years. They have really bought in to our philosophy and style and this is such an exciting group.

"The opposition we face bring different styles, which will be a challenge, but we are excited for what lies ahead."

The Nations Cup, he argued, is an invaluable opportunity for Scotland to play against international sides based in and around them in the world rankings. Scotland are ranked No 16 with Ireland four places above the Tartan Hearts. USA, who played in the Paris Olympics, are in 13th spot and Korea at No 15.

Duncan added: "We are minus our captain, Sarah Robertson, as she is unavailable for selection. We will miss her leadership and performance levels, but the tournament gives the chance for others to step up into leadership roles,

"The combination of Amy (Costello), Millie (Steiger) and Sarah (Jamieson), who will lead the team as captains, will do a tremendous job."

The Nations Cup starts a huge year for the squad as Scotland also compete in the EuroHockey Championships in Monchengladbach, Germany, from August 9 to 17 where they have been drawn in Pool B alongside Belgium, Spain and England.

Scotland squad for Chile: Amber Murray (Sutton Coldfield), Amy Costello (HGC, Netherlands), Bronwyn Shields, Jessica Buchanan, Katie Birch (Wimbledon), Charlotte Watson (Beeston), Ellie Mackenzie (Surbiton), Eve Pearson, Rebecca Birch (Bowdon), Fiona Burnet (Club Egara, Spain), Frances Lonergan (Western Wildcats), Heather McEwan (Royal Victory, Belgium), Jennifer Eadie, Millie Steiger (Clydesdale Western), Ava Findlay, Jessica Ross, Ruth Blaikie (The University of Edinburgh), Sarah Jamieson (Watsonians). Travelling reserve: Zara Kennedy (The University of Edinburgh). Non-travelling reserves: Ellie Wilson (Watsonians), Ava Wadsworth (Durham University)

FIXTURES: Sunday, February 23: Ireland v Scotland (20.00), Tuesday, February 25: Korea v Scotland (18.00), Thursday, February 27: New Zealand v Scotland (18.00).

PICTURE: Sarah Jamieson in training at Peffermill. Picture *Nigel Duncan*



Millie Steiger training with Scotland at freezing Peffermill last Sunday. Picture by *Nigel Duncan*



FOCUSED: Flashback to Amy Costello (yellow bib) tackling Sarah Robertson in training. Picture *Nigel Duncan*