

Watson strikes early but Scots denied by Kiwis

Scotland harboured dreams of making the semi-finals of the FIH Nations Hockey Cup after Dundonian, Charlotte Watson, claimed a goal after only two minutes against New Zealand in their final Pool B clash in Chile.

The Tartan Hearts required a win over the Kiwis to claim a slot in the top four and they held out until the 25th minute of a tight match until Kaitlin Cotter netted with a long shot from the top of the D after a penalty corner.

Further goals from skipper Olivia Shannon with just over six minutes remaining and Emma Findlay, who netted from an acute angle after Scotland gambled by withdrawing goalkeeper, Jessica Buchanan, in the final two minutes, secured New Zealand's passage into the semi-finals.

The Black Sticks, No 10 in the world, now have a shot at promotion to the Pro League featuring the top eight nations in world hockey.

Scotland, ranked No 16 in the world, play in the relegation pool for teams from fifth of eight in this tournament in Santiago, but they must take heart from their performances in the 3-0 defeat to Ireland in their opener, the 2-0 victory over Korea and even from the 3-1 defeat by New Zealand.

Earlier, Watson's early, well-taken goal followed a penalty corner, the Olympian injecting the ball to fellow Olympian, Amy Costello, who fired towards goal. The ball rebounded from New Zealand goalkeeper Grace O'Hanlon and Watson made no mistake from close in.

A giant boost for coach Chris Duncan and his squad who held the advantage to the first break, with Ellie Mackenzie threatening down the left wing, and goalkeeper Buchanan only had one real save to make.

Phil Burrows, the New Zealand coach, fired his squad up for the second quarter and they took the game to Scotland, forcing them back and cutting off supply to the forwards, but the Tartan Hearts hung in until the third penalty corner to the Kiwis.

The ball came back to Cotter who blasted the ball home from range to put the Scots on the back foot with a lot to do to make the final four.

They plugged away and only a diving stop from O'Hanlon and a stick save up high near the postage stamp of the goal after a snap shot from Jess Ross prevented the Scots claiming their second, but the writing appeared on the wall as New Zealand pressed.

Still, Heather McEwan had a sniff from close in but the ball was sent clear, but it was an uphill struggle against a rugged and determined New Zealand side who did not concede again despite being handed two yellow cards in the later stages and added a second from Shannon following a penalty corner.

As the clock ticked down the short-handed Kiwis broke down the right and a shot from Cotter was deflected home by Shannon forcing Duncan to withdraw his goalkeeper as a final gamble but Findlay made no mistake from wide out on the right.

Heartbreak for Scotland who now wait to find their opponents

in the relegation pool and Duncan must lift his squad for a final push to remain in the top league in the Nations Cup and avoid the trap door into Nations Cup 2 over the weekend.

Later, Ireland beat Korea 2-0 and Scotland finished third in the group.

LIBRARY PICTURE: Watson (right) against Ukraine