

# Jubilant Scotland finish fifth in Nations Cup

Scotland edged Japan 2-0 to claim fifth spot in the FIH Nations Cup hockey thanks to a dominant performance and goals from Amy Costello and Fiona Burnet in five crucial minutes of the final quarter in Chile.

The Tartan Hearts did survive one real scare on a Japanese breakaway and Scotland goalkeeper Jessica Buchanan (Wimbledon HC, London) also got down low at her near post to smother, a wonderful reflex save in a tough situation.

Olympian Charlotte Watson, the Player of the Match, was all smiles at the end of the crunch clash played in 27c, and the Beeston HC star said: "We've played above our rankings and I am absolutely delighted and very happy.

"Now we want to try and qualify for the World cup and hopefully we can make it."

Japan had six penalty corners against Scotland's five, four of them coming inside the last minute, and Scotland scored with their sixth and final award, but this is a great result for Scotland who moved up to No 15 in the world during the tournament but were still going in against Japan, a side ranked No 12.

Earlier, Scotland, making their first appearance in this

competition, dominated the first quarter against a side they last played nine years ago, and it was the same story in the second session, but the scoreline was deadlocked. However, Japan broke near the end of the quarter and Nanami Kaneko received the ball just inside the Scotland half.

She raced in on goal with blue jerseys frantically trying to get back. Buchanan advanced. The Japanese player rounded her but then lost control and the ball spun out over the goal line. A tremendous chance against the run of play, gone.

Scotland re-grouped and continued to drive forward with Japan clearing off the line from a penalty corner late in the third quarter.

And the Scots finally broke through with 13min 11sec remaining, Olympian Amy Costello, who plays club hockey for HGC in The Netherlands, firing towards goal from a penalty corner and the ball landed in the net after a deflection. The referee referred the incident to the video umpire, but the man in the box ruled in favour of the Tartan Hearts.

Japan drove forward looking for an equaliser and Buchanan had to produce a wonder stop at the foot of her near post to deny their rivals, and it proved to be crucial.

Minutes later, the Scots mounted a quick attack, driving through the heart of the Japanese defence and the ball was picked up by Fiona Burnet (Club Egara, in Terrassa, Spain) who arrowed the ball between the goalkeeper and a defender and into the backboard. Joy for Scotland and a 2-0 lead with just over eight minutes remaining.

Their opposition again charged forward but the Scots held out despite some nervy moments and those four penalty corners, starting with 43 seconds left. Another was awarded with 12 seconds on the clock and a third with 11 seconds remaining.

The final award came with two seconds left but Scotland

survived and the players raised their sticks in triumph before going over to celebrate with a knot of flag-waving Scots in the stands.

Chirs Duncan, Scotland's head coach, had called on his squad to produce one final performance in what he called their "cup final", and they did against opponents who defended well and provided a tough challenge in the heat of Santiago.

Earlier, Canada were relegated when they lost 2-0 to Korea.

PICTURE: Bronwyn Shields (Wimbledon HC) in action against Japan in Chile