

## U15 Girls International: Scotland 1-3 England

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Tuesday 26 April 2011



*England Under 15 Girls Squad v Scotland 2011*

A limited budget and short time span meant that preparation for the first ever ESFA girls' international was difficult, and accepting a challenge from Scotland, one of the most experienced schools international teams (this was their 10<sup>th</sup> game this season) and recent runners up in the Bob Dougherty Trophy, might just have been a step too far too soon. But thanks to manager Sarah Steadman (Queens School, Bushey) and assistant Miranda Hall (Parmiters School) it was soon clear that there would be a great spirit in this squad, a sense of purpose for the game to come and yet a determination to enjoy every minute of the experience. Even practicing the National Anthem on the coach was not out of the question.

The game was played at the Toryglen Indoor Arena, next to Hampden Park on Saturday 23 April, and a full size 3G pitch with spectator seating for nearly 1000, made it an ideal venue, one regularly used by the SFA and even Scottish league sides in very bad weather. A large crowd gathered and the game had all the formalities of a full international, even if God Save the Queen was sung a little more nervously and shyly than on the coach.

As the game began it was quickly apparent that nerves would play no part in this as Olivia Millington rattled in a tackle and using her powerful left foot sent Jodie Brett away down the right and England won the first corner of the game. It took ten minutes before Scotland mounted a dangerous attack and won a corner. A powerful strike led to a scramble in the box which became the first opportunity for Shayla Burgess in goal to demonstrate her strength and bravery as she launched herself at feet in the melee. Quickly releasing the ball she then sent Millie Farrow away who outpaced the Scottish defence only to have her shot brilliantly saved

by Chloe Logan in goal. Shayla was again called into action after 19 minutes when a break by Scotland's Carla Jackson brought a superb diving save to her right.

England attacks were beginning to look more and more dangerous and the first substitutions of the game brought on Ashleigh Porschke whose first touch took her down the right wing from where she hit a delightful cross, and Millie Farrow was on hand to crash a right foot volley past the keeper from 10 yards out, a superb goal at any level of football.

Despite still playing some delightful football, England began to relax a little too much and the battling Scots came much more into the game, with Georgie Rafferty and Lucy Graham starting to dominate in midfield. After a succession of corners Shayla finally spilt one but was relieved to see Scotland fire over the bar from 10 yards out. The final 5 minutes of the half were challenging for England and the intelligent covering and tackling of Molly Johnson was called upon on several times. Then as the half time whistle neared England's resolute defence finally cracked. Scotland captain Lizzie Arnot found space on the right, crossed well into a crowded box and her compatriot, Lois Heuchan bundled the ball over the line.

Half time: Scotland 1-1 England.

The Scots certainly had their tails up at half time and the worry was that the long journey might be finally taking its toll on England. That worry was quickly dispelled as the second half started when a long ball from inspirational captain Izzy Sullivan sent Millie Farrow goalwards only for the Scots' goalkeeper to push her effort past the post.

The game then swung from end to end but any danger from Scotland was very confidently tidied up by Olivia Millington and Helen Seed who were proving a formidable pairing in the middle of the back four. Meanwhile up front a real understanding was developing between Millie Farrow and Jodie Brett and their inter-passing and movement off the ball in support of each other was a joy to behold. It was hard to believe they had never played together until today. 14 minutes into the half Megan Goss joined the fun from the substitutes bench and the three ripped the Scots defence apart with some quick inter-passing in the box resulting in Millie being brought down for a penalty. Full of confidence Jodie stepped up and boomed it past the Scots keeper for 2-1 to England.

The Scots fought hard to get back into the game but took another setback in the 54<sup>th</sup> minute when yet another fast two touch move involving Porschke, Farrow and Brett sent Millie free again and this time she showed the advancing goalkeeper no mercy as she slotted the ball comfortably into the corner for 3-1, and her second goal for her country.

The English now had their tails up for sure and frequent raids down the right from Molly Johnson could have resulted in another goal. After 59 minutes Daniella Francioso finally got her chance in goal and was called on to make a very positive clearance from the top of the box immediately, but it was the strength and understanding of the back 4 which kept any marauding Scots well at bay. The fast interplay of the forwards was dangerous throughout and even in the last minute of the match two opportunities, the first to Millie Farrow and the second to Megan Goss, brought outstanding saves from the Scotland goalkeeper.

At a function in Hampden Park after the game the England squad were presented with medals and a cup for the occasion which was sponsored by Lloyds TSB Scotland.

Congratulations then to Sarah Steadman and Miranda Hall for the way they took on this team and in such a short time set them up to be an organised and formidable force, yet more importantly engineered a real team spirit which allowed the girls to play with freedom and especially enjoyment. Even the most strident soccer misogynists of the ESFA were moved to say that the performance was 'not bad' – praise indeed.

**England Squad** (all played in a rolling sub system):

GK Shayla Burgess (Stantonbury Campus), 2. Molly Johnson (Aston Comprehensive School), 3. Phillippa Cowley (Cottesloe School), 4. Helen Seed (Broughton Business College) 5. Olivia Millington (Ashton CS College), 6. Keren Allen (Windsor High School), 7. Ashleigh Porschke (West Kirby Grammar School), 8. Jodie Hartley (Winterhill School), 9. Izzy Sullivan (Rushcliffe School) Capt., 10. Jodie Brett (Henry Cort Community Coll), 11. Millie Farrow (Cams Hill School), 12. Sally Gill (Castle School), 13 GK Daniella Francioso (Avon Valley School), 14. Megan Goss (St Bernard's High School), 15. Sophie Kenny Levick (Polesworth High School), 16. Georgia Griffiths (Leasowes High School).

