

Bob Doherty Cup Full Report

Friday 05 April 2013

Opening day fixtures

Northern Ireland 0 England 2

Despite the awful weather of the last week the Bob Docherty Cup began in perfect conditions at the Queen's University Sports Centre in Belfast.

The hosts, Northern Ireland, began their campaign against England and were soon under pressure as their visitors competed fiercely for any loose ball in midfield where Millie Elson was having an inspired game. Despite having most of the possession England were being frustrated by a good Northern Irish defence which ensured the visitors were not going to find life easy. Even following seven corners England could not find the target until with minutes of the half left to go Megan Taylor won the ball deep in her own half and set off a clinical passing movement which released Georgia Stanway on the right flank. The talented forward then rounded the full back and sent a cracking effort into the net – the keeper had no chance! England began the second half in spirited fashion and soon gained a further advantage when Tori Adlam seized upon a ball which the Irish 'keeper could not gather and she clinically tucked it away. Not showing any signs of being discouraged the girls of Northern Ireland raised their game and battled strongly to ensure that they would suffer no further breeches of their defence.

Wales 0 Republic of Ireland 4

Wales found themselves up against a good Republic of Ireland side in the game being played on the artificial surface. Jasmine Spence went very close in the fifth minute firing just wide of the Irish goal but a major defensive error five minutes later let in Sinead Ryan who sent the ball flying into the top corner of the Welsh net. The Republic went further ahead in the twenty first minute when the outstanding Roma McLaughlin opened her account.

Eleven minutes into the second half Jessica Nolan scored to put the game out of the reach of Wales as the Republic girls piled on the pressure. In the dying minutes of the game Eleanor Ryan Doyle popped up to head home following an excellent cross from Jamie Finn. This was a very good win by the Republic over a spirited Wales team who will undoubtedly bounce back.



England in action

Day Two

Northern Ireland 0 Scotland 5

Today's fixtures saw Scotland making their first appearance against hosts Northern Ireland. Scotland began very well and soon had the scoreboard ticking over in the 4th minute with a good goal from Chantelle Brown who scored following a smart turn and finish after the ball had rebounded from the bar. Scotland applied strong pressure and Northern Ireland were only able to respond with sporadic breaks so a second goal seemed likely and came courtesy of the outstanding Erin Cuthbert who turned beautifully from a wide position and thundered home a shot from 25yds. Northern Ireland showed their determination and following a good period of play for them a promising attack was only repulsed following an excellent last ditch tackle from Cassie Cowper. Scotland dealt another telling blow just before the half time break when Amy Lynch volleyed home from fully 30yds which left the 'keeper stranded following an under hit clearance from the Irish defence.

The Scottish team began the second half full of confidence and continued to exert most of the pressure with Northern Ireland finding it difficult to break down the resolve of the Scottish defenders. After substitutions from both teams Scottish captain, Courtney White, took the game by the scruff of the neck and scored two excellent goals in the 51st and 57th minute, one an outstanding effort from outside the box following a corner.

Republic of Ireland 1 England 1

What a ding dong battle here! England began the game brightly with both Natasha Fenton and Georgia Stanway going close and the Republic keeper, Amanda McQuillan, called into early action. Eleanor Ryan Doyle then tested the quality of Chloe Beattie in the English goal but

found her in uncompromising form. Zoe Tynan and Millie Elson were working well in front of goal but the Irish defence was determined to keep them at bay. After 15 minutes good work up the English right wing was rewarded when Stanway put Natasha Fenton through allowing her to pick her spot and direct the ball into the bottom corner. The game picked up in intensity but both defences were in fine form when suddenly the promising Roma McLaughlin let one fly at the English goal which Beattie was glad to keep hold. The half continued with both teams restricted to long range speculative efforts when in the final minute Eleanor Ryan Doyle struck a cracker which the English defence were glad to see strike the bar and go over.

Half time – and a moment to get your breath back!

The eagerly awaited second half began with Laura Hooper forcing an excellent save from Irish 'keeper McQuillan whilst at the other end Beattie was kept on her toes by Erica Byrne and Dearbhaile Beirne who both had good efforts. This was turning out to be one of the really memorable games and one which would put girls football to the fore. Roma McLaughlin was imposing her skills in the Irish midfield but the collective Irish efforts were unable to unsettle the English defence which was being well marshalled by Megan Taylor. The Irish goalmouth was also not without incident whilst Elson was prompting her forwards and Erica Byrne into making several last minute challenges. Jamie Finn was tireless in her efforts on behalf of the Republic. This game had everything, great saves, superb tackling, exquisite combinations in midfield and forwards keen to impose their mark on the game not to mention coaches and spectators losing it on the sides! The twist in the tale when in the 4th minute of added time the Republic won a corner, hearts in mouths all round as Jessica Nolan hit a superb inswinging effort to the near post which caught the head of the unlucky Amber Tullet and glanced into the English net. Was there a push? Did it go straight in? The crowd were in raptures.

Disappointment or relief – it does not matter as this was one of the really great games to be privileged to watch.



Fenton scores against Republic of Ireland

Day Three

Northern Ireland 1 Wales 0

Both teams began this game seeking their first point and both started very well in trying to keep possession of the ball. Chances were few and far between but both teams battled to gain the upper hand. With games shortened today to 25 min each way the time seemed to fly by and the mid point of the game was upon us without any real clear chances being created.

The Welsh raised the tempo at the start of the second half and the game became more lively

with the Irish eventually hitting the back of the net only for it to be ruled out for offside. Then, following an inspired piece of play, Rebecca Bassett rounded the keeper only to see her effort hit the post. Bassett continued to be the main source of trouble for Wales and she was rewarded with a late winner to secure all three points for the hosts.

England 0 Scotland 0

The game began with some heavy Scottish pressure but they failed to create any clear scoring opportunities with their efforts being thwarted by a resilient English defence. Scotland continued to probe with their best chances coming from Chelsea Cornett who was causing a few problems down the right flank. England left back, Amber Tullett was working hard and occasionally found time to put in a forward foray. This competition between two players was mirrored all over the pitch with numerous contests evening each other out. Free kicks around the box were a real difficulty for the English 'keeper, Chloe Beattie, who watched one pass over the bar from Courtney Whyte and another scrambled clear. In the closing minutes a long clearance from Natasha Fenton, back helping out, found Georgia Stanway who rounded the keeper and was then dispossessed by the covering Scots rearguard.

The game continued to be played at a frantic pace in the second half with no quarter being given by either team. The English back four looked solid with Megan Taylor and Charlotte Steggles outstanding. Taylor particularly had to keep on her toes as Scotland's Amy Gallacher was proving to be a real threat. Both teams threatened from corners and a free kick from Whyte went well over the bar while at the other end an excellent inswinging corner from Tullett was ushered behind by Scotland only for Becky Flaherty to safely claim the next cross. England's last minute hoodoo seemed to have struck again when a free kick from the Scottish left sliced into the air and was about to spin into the net when it was helped on the way by a Scottish foot. Offside said the linesman, contentious said the Scottish support, no goal said the ref! The game finished goalless.

Northern Ireland 1 Republic of Ireland 1

Both teams started well in this Irish derby and the early signs were that the game would not remain goalless. The Northern Ireland goalkeeper was the first to be tested when she reacted calmly to a Republic move which saw Rachel Fitzmaurice put through. Jamie Finn had another good effort saved moments later while the Republic goal was also under threat from the determined Northern Irish forwards where Rebecca Bassett looked very dangerous. The Republic gained the upper hand midway through the half and the brave Northern defence was called upon repeatedly. Towards the end of the half the game swung again with McQuillan called upon to make fine saves from Emma McMaster and Bassett. The half finished with Fitzmaurice forcing Kirsty McCaughtry into an excellent save.

Both teams raised their game at the start of the second half and both defences were called into desperate action something had to give. The Republic attacked strongly down the right flank only to be stopped by another good save by McCaughtry. The Northern response was to surge down the field where the ball broke to Sarah Connolly who volleyed past into the Republic net. This galvanised the Republic into greater effort and Jessica Galvin was proving to be a real handful on the Republic left. Brave defending by the North was necessary with Blaithean Mackin

having an outstanding game. The Republic somehow stepped up the pressure again and some fine efforts from Dearbhaile Bierne, Eleanor Ryan Doyle and Roma McLaughlin tested the Northern resolve. Finally the breakthrough came when McLaughlin met a superb corner from Nolan and headed home. A grandstand finish was expected and a superb low effort from Nolan struck the post – how close! When the final whistle came everyone’s blood pressure could return to normal! Great game, fair result.

Scotland 1 Wales 1

Scotland opened strongly but the early chances did not produce any goals and the Welsh counter attacks looked dangerous. The Welsh girls were showing passion and determination against a strong Scottish team and working hard to earn their first points. Disappointment was never far away and just before the half time whistle Alyshia Walker sent a powerful shot into the Welsh net for the opening goal.

The second half opened with Wales progressing strongly with Niamh Tinman and Hannah Miles having great games. Wales gained their reward when Hannah Cain slotted home from a corner to bring the scores level. Both teams were pushing to take all of the points but the Scots were repeatedly denied by a resolute Welsh defence. Thrills and spills galore but the teams had to share the spoils in this thrilling encounter.

Final Day

Two games today which will decide the Bob Docherty Cup with three teams in with a chance of taking the glory.

England 1 Wales 3

England began today’s game knowing that only a win would be good enough to take the title. Wales had other ideas and a keen competitive game soon ensued. The first effort on goal came from Georgia Stanway who saw her shot drift wide of the post. A quick counter from the Welsh led to a corner which England scrambled away. In the 8th minute another period of Welsh pressure saw the ball fall for Hannah Miles who smashed it into the net. Shortly after Sarah Saunders broke through but shot wide under pressure from the advancing Jessica Lewandowski. England applied the pressure and scored only for the effort to be negated for offside. Amber Tullett saw a well struck free kick just clear the Welsh bar but Saunders soon responded for Wales and put them two goals ahead with a clinical effort. England continued to persevere with a tidy passing game during the last 5 minutes of the half but failed to create any chances.

The second half was played mostly in the Welsh half but England squandered the chances which came their way, Stanway shot wide of the left post and Jordan Littleboy headed over from a corner. Zoe Tynan and Kelly Snook combined well to win another corner which Wales did well to clear. Halfway through the second half good work by Natasha Fenton and Tori Adlam put Georgia Stanway in the clear and she made no mistake this time. Stanway found herself clear for another chance but Kathryn Brown appeared from nowhere to block a goalbound effort. Wales continued to defy the English and a breakaway in the 25th minute saw

Sarah Saunders put in a high cross which Chloe Beattie pushed onto the post before recovering possession. A flag from the linesman indicated the ball had crossed the line, Wales were ecstatic. A really excellent win for the Welsh which they deserved for their resilience.

Scotland 1 Republic of Ireland 1

A win for either side would have put them top and untouchable and the pace of the game reflected the player's urgency. The Republic started strongly and Eleanor Ryan Doyle went close in the 3rd minute but her shot wide of the advancing goalkeeper struck the side netting. A few minutes later Doyle was again disappointed when a successful strike was ruled out for offside. Scotland rallied and in a lightning break Alyshia Walker had an excellent effort rebound off the post.

The second half again started with the Republic in the ascendency when Jamie Finn hit a wonderful cross into the box which found Sinead Ryan who only had to tap in at the back post. The Scots were dismayed but the setback seemed to galvanise them into greater efforts and an end to end game developed. Nearing full time a furious Scottish onslaught finally resulted in Amy Gallacher hitting the target much to the relief of their team and supporters. The final six minutes were contested fiercely but at the final whistle the draw meant that Scotland had won this incredibly exciting tournament courtesy of having a greater goal difference (1) than the Republic. How close.

For a final group table and confirmation of all scores [please visit the SAFIB website here](#).

We would like to thank all the teams for taking part in the tournament and the Northern Irish Association for hosting. Well done girls, we are already looking forward to next year!



ESFA U15 Schoolgirl Squad

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