

YOUTH AND EXPERIENCE MIXED FOR FIRA OPENER

Friday, 15 May 2009

Scotland Women's head coach Jamie Dempsey today announced the squad for the crucial FIRA European Championship opener against Russia in Stockholm, Sweden on Sunday (17 May, kick-off 1pm).

The announcement came as the squad left for Sweden for the first of three Pool A matches in a single week, in a group which Scotland must top to secure World Cup qualification.

Eighteen year-old Sarah Quick – fresh from her Premier league, cup, and under-18 cup treble – has been named in the senior squad for the first time in her fledgling career while, by contrast, Donna Kennedy returns to the front line alongside back-row stalwarts Lynne Reid and Susie Brown for her 101st starting cap.

Scrum-half Sarah Gill will start for the first time since being injured against France in the 6 Nations and has been offered the chance to re-establish her half-back partnership with Tanya Griffith.

Dempsey said: "Definitely the most challenging aspect of this tournament will be the high intensity of these three matches in such a short space of time (six days) but we have a squad of 26 where the competition for places and the focus on winning our group is extremely high.

"Last season Russia competed in the B tournament but they won it convincingly. They've just competed in the Sevens World Cup and have been training as a semi-professional outfit for the past nine months.

"They're coming here with a lot of confidence. I'm expecting them to be quick, athletic and very physical. We'll have to combat that with our own physicality, borne out of our experiences in the 6 Nations Championships which will hopefully give us the edge." Scotland squad to face Russia in Stockholm, Sweden, on Sunday 17 May (kick-off 1pm)

15 Lucy Millard VICE CAPTAIN (Murrayfield Wanderers)
 14 Cara d'Silva (RHC)
 13 Laura Steven (Murrayfield Wanderers)
 12 Suzi Newton (Team Northumbria / Blaydon)
 11 Veronica Fitzpatrick (RHC) 10 Tanya Griffith (RHC)
 9 Sarah Gill (Murrayfield Wanderers) 1 Heather Lockhart (Hillhead / Jordanhill)
 2 Sarah-Louise Walker (Watsonians)
 3 Beth Dickens (Murrayfield Wanderers)
 4 Lana Blyth (Murrayfield Wanderers)
 5 Lindsay Wheeler (Team Northumbria / Blaydon)
 6 Lynne Reid CAPTAIN (RHC)
 8 Susie Brown (Hillhead / Jordanhill)
 7 Donna Kennedy (Worcester) Replacements
 16 Sarah Quick (Murrayfield Wanderers)
 17 Ellen Beattie (Murrayfield Wanderers)
 18 Louise Moffat (Kirkcaldy)
 19 Keri Holdsworth (Watsonians)
 20 Ruth Slaven (Murrayfield Wanderers)
 21 Louise Dalgliesh (RHC)
 22 Erin Kerr (Richmond)

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FIRA European Championship – the winner of each pool will be qualified to WRWC 2010 (no knock-out stage)

Pool A
 Scotland (5th in 6 Nations)
 Netherlands
 Russia
 Belgium Pool B
 Italy (6th in 6 Nations)
 Spain
 Sweden
 Germany

FIRA European Championship schedule (times are local)
 Scotland Women v Russia, Sunday 17 May (kick-off 1pm)
 Scotland Women v Belgium, Wednesday 20 May (kick-off 4pm)
 Scotland Women v Netherlands, Saturday 23 May (kick-off 1pm)