



## WALES QUALIFY FOR THE WORLDS

The Welsh Netball team qualified for the 2007 world Championships, to be held in Fiji, by winning the European qualifying tournament held in Belfast over the weekend of the 16 - 18 June 2006.

Qualification was expected to be tight and the tournament delivered some close, tense and exciting games. Wales started the tournament with a match against the "auld" enemy - Scotland. It had been rumoured that Scotland had been in intensive training for the competition and it was evident they had when their squad took to the court looking fitter, sharper and totally focused than ever before.

Wales took a little time to settle against Scotland's spoiling tactics but the defensive work practiced over recent weeks led to several key turnovers. The lead changed hands numerous times in the first 3 quarters with neither team able to stamp its authority on the game. Wales changed its C/WA combination at both quarter and half time in an attempt to break down Scotland's zone defence and tight circle marking. Becky James and Rhiannon Ace scored steadily throughout the first 45 minutes but this was matched by the Scottish shooters. A 2 goal half-time lead was carried into the final quarter, but this didn't daunt Scotland who took the lead after 5 minutes. Wales suddenly found their rhythm and scored 4 goals without reply. Key turnovers in the defensive third were converted to establish a 4 goal lead with only 4 minutes remaining. Both teams continued to fight for every ball. Despite continual Scottish pressure, Wales held their nerve and ended the match as winners 41 - 37. Sian Carrington took to the court in the final quarter and earned her first International Cap.

Saturday, the second day of the tournament, saw the home nation, Northern Ireland, take to the court for the first time, supported by a very vocal bank of spectators. Once again, it was clear that Northern Ireland had been training hard for this tournament intent on qualifying for Fiji. Both sides took time to settle. When the ball found its way into the shooting circles, both sets of shooters were scoring goals with relative ease. Wales finished the first quarter 1 goal up and went in at half time leading by 2.

Several turnovers and some great passages of play saw the ball making it into the Welsh shooting circle with greater regularity. Possession was converted into goals and Wales held an 8 goal lead at three-quarter time.

Northern Ireland did not give up and Noleen Lennon, their Goal Shooter, was creating good space and her linkage with her Goal Attack meant that they were still creating goal scoring opportunities. However, tighter defence led to more turnovers and Wales started to extend their lead. Wales ran out 54 - 41 winners with their shooters scoring 54 from 59 attempts. At 92% this is the highest shooting average ever recorded by Wales in an International match.

Although the Welsh squad had only limited time together prior to the tournament, they played with great determination. All members of the squad and it's management team played an integral part in the success.

#### **Players:**

Ursula Bowers (Captain)	Suzie Drane
Rhiannon Ace	Anna Mayes
Becky James	Jamilla Abbott
Anna Joll	Sian Carrington
Sophie Baxter	Sara Hale
Helen Case	Ffion Roach

<b>Coach:</b>	Julia Longville
<b>Assistant Coach:</b>	Iain Root
<b>Team Manager:</b>	Alison Dacey
<b>Physiotherapist:</b>	Kent Fyrth
<b>Primary Carer:</b>	Andrea Faull
<b>Performance Analyst:</b>	Peter O'Donoghue

#### **Tournament Results:**

Wales	41	37	Scotland
Wales	54	41	Northern Ireland
Scotland	47	43	Northern Ireland

**Wales and Scotland qualify for World Championships 2007**