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PRESS RELEASE

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WALES U18 versus NORTH U21 Women 13th July 2013 - Cardiff

Further development of the younger members of the North U21 squad saw them competing against the Wales U18 Euro Hockey side in Cardiff at the weekend.

Head Coach Craig Togher said, "Coming here from the 3 wins and a draw against Scotland with a different squad poses some challenges but I am confident in the player's abilities and look forward to an excellent day"

In temperatures soaring above 30° the players showed their tenacity against a well-drilled and physically stronger Wales squad

Wales U18 - 1 v North U21 - 0

Within the first two minutes of the game, North found themselves pressuring the Wales defence forcing errors, but could not create the finishes that became the trade mark of the games against Scotland.

Wales began to break down the defence in the North mid-field line, and with some lucky breaks down the left managed to get through and onto the 'keeper forcing saves from Charlotte Smith.

North continued their attacks but still could not convert. Attempts on goal from Kate Harris, Laura Thompson, Lauren Burrell and Sioned Davies all skimming the posts or forcing good saves from the Wales 'keeper.

Early in the second half Wales once again broke out of their mid-field down the left hand side and following a clearance save from Smith, Wales took the re-bounce from high in the D to drive home the only goal of the game.

Captain Rosie Atkinson said "We should have scored and won that game – we had the best chances. The heat on the pitch was something that played against us"

Wales U18 – 2 v North U21 – 3

As temperatures cooled at the Wales National Stadium, North prepared their tactics and changed their formation. This resulted in 'keeper Smith having little to do in the second game as North once again dominated the mid-field and pushed towards the Wales goal. Only the Wales keeper denying a determined North side on several occasions.

Strong running and pinch point dribbling from young North players Alice Williamson and Cath Foy delighted the crowd. Accurate and searching passes down the line and across field from Kate Harris opened up the Wales defence. But Wales managed to hold on until the full time whistle.

At full time it was nil nil but with North once again on the ascendancy. Wales opted for the Penalty Shuffle to decide the matches overall.

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North selected Captain Rosie Atkinson, Georgina Read, Chloe Tyler, Anna Smithies and Kate Harris to take theirs. Keeper Charlotte Smith stepped up first to deny Wales an early lead. Atkinson, Smithies and Read took North to a victory in a nail biting final session when keeper Smith denied Wales in their final attempt.

Head Coach for Wales U18, Claire Harvie said, “With just two weeks before we head off to the Euro’s, these games have been vital in terms of our preparation. The heat has played a significant part in today’s games but we have to give credit to a well disciplined and well drilled North side. We hope these fixtures can continue into the future as finding this level of quality hockey for preparation games is difficult – North U21 provided us with some serious tests today.”

North Head Coach Craig Togher summed up the games by saying “I am extremely proud of the squad once again. We went to Scotland with perhaps a stronger squad overall, but the players today showed determination beyond their years to overcome the heat and high standard that Wales produced. We now have a strong pool of players for next season and look forward to working with them, and newer players, in the new season”