

## **2012 Cerebral Palsy Home Nations Championships**

The Northern Ireland Cerebral Palsy Squad put on a great display at the 2012 Cerebral Palsy Home Nations Championships this summer.

Northern Ireland kicked off the competition in style with a 2-0 victory against a very talented Scotland team. Northern Ireland dominated early possession in front of an expectant home crowd and they didn't have to wait long to get the breakthrough as young Ryan Walker blasted the ball in off the post from the edge of the box after a great cross field ball from Cormac Birt after 22 minutes. Northern Ireland continued to press but could not find another goal before half-time as the Scotland defence stood firm with Cameron Muir in particular in fine form.

The second half was a tighter affair with Scotland pressing for the equaliser and calling Marc Smith in the Northern Ireland goal into action on a few occasions. Steven Halpin settled the nerves however with a crisp first time finish in the box after good work again by the impressive Walker. Scotland battled on and did come close to narrowing the deficit but the boys in green stood firm with defenders Darren Lemon and William Hamilton worthy of a special mention for their defensive qualities.

Final Score – Northern Ireland 2 – 0 Scotland

England then played Scotland and the comprehensive 3-0 scoreline was just reward for an impressive display. Goals from Joel Taylor, Emyle Rudder and Harry Baker put the icing on a slick performance that could well have produced more goals but for the impressive Connor Cameron in goal.

Final Score – England 3 – 0 Scotland

The Final game and top spot was up for grabs as Northern Ireland faced England. England started the game where they had left off in the previous match, passing the ball quickly and creating a few opportunities. Great defending from William Hamilton and Andrew Young kept the chances from long range and when the box was entered Marc Smith in the NI goal was exceptional. England did get a breakthrough however in the 16th minute as James Roberts sprung from defence and got on the end of a cross from the lively Oliver Nugent. Northern Ireland hit back almost immediately and it was that man again Ryan Walker who finished clinically after a mix-up in the English defence. England continued to dominate possession and NI were pleased to hear the half-time whistle with the score still at 1-1.

The second half did not bring a change to the game pattern as England again kept the ball well and forced Smith in the NI goal in to a few top class saves. NI remained a threat on the break however and as the midfield started to support Walker he continued to be the focal point of the home sides attacks just missing the goal with another ferocious left foot drive on 47 minutes. England grabbed victory however when livewire Nugent slammed

home from the edge of the box after yet another point blank save from Smith looked like it would frustrate the visitors once again.

NI made a few subs to try and generate one last push to snatch a draw with Thomas McCormick doing well and the exciting Jordan Walker making his debut but it wasn't to be and England held on for a deserved victory at the Home Nations spoils.

NI Team Coach and former International Mal Donaghy was quick to praise the players 'Credit must go to all 3 squads for putting on 3 very competitive games over the weekend. It was very hot and yet the movement and work-rate was unwavering and the standard of play at times was exceptional. We are pleased with our performances against two very strong Nations in CP football and the lads must take confidence from that as we progress with our development'

**Northern Ireland** team back row L-R

**R Walker, J Kearns, D Lemon, M Smith, J Prenter, C Birt , T Mc Cormack**

Front row L-R

**W Hamilton, J Walker, A Young ( Capt ) D Fegan, S Halpin**

The IFA have 2 International Cerebral Palsy Squads in operation, a Junior squad for ambulant males aged 7 – 14 and a senior squad for ambulant males for ages 15 and over. You may also be eligible to play Cerebral palsy Football if you have a restriction in mobility caused by brain injury or stroke.

For more information on Cerebral Palsy Football please contact Alan Crooks at the IFA on [acrooks@irishfa.com](mailto:acrooks@irishfa.com)