



Dundee University was the venue for the third Scottish Student Challenge event, which saw the best in the student game compete against the men's and women's national teams. The late withdrawal of the English Universities team gave an opportunity for the Scottish Junior Women's programme to participate in the event and the youngsters were well worth their place over the course of the day.

The women's event produced three competitive and entertaining matches which demonstrated the benefits of this competitive environment for the domestic game. The first match between the national senior women and the junior women's squad got the tournament off to a blistering start, with the junior players demonstrating a competitive edge and defensive strength which caused their older opponents problems. The 3 – 2 victory for the senior team reflects the impressive performance of the youngsters who deserve great credit for such a combative and confident approach.

This approach was again in evidence against the Scottish Universities team, which had to battle hard following a comfortable 25-15 first set win. The second (29-27) and third sets (21-25) saw juniors' coach Vince Krawczyk use his extensive substitutes bench to its maximum, ensuring that his enthusiastic young players got full opportunity to demonstrate their ability. However the Scottish Universities team, encompassing six nationalities, was ultimately too strong and closed out the match with a 25 – 9 fourth set win.

In the final match of the women's event both Scottish Universities and the Senior Women were looking to establish consistency in their game and reduce the errors that had been evident in their matches against the juniors. The match held the spectators' interest in a game in which the initiative flowed from one team to the other. However despite leading the senior women throughout the fourth set the students found the final stage one step too far and couldn't force the match into a deciding set, with the senior women closing out the match 25-23.

In the men's competition the national men's programme provided two of the three teams – Caledonia Blues and Whites, representing a mixture of seasoned, experienced internationals such as Alan Krawczyk and Stuart Edgar and the new generation of talented players such as Kevin Lawrie (South Ayrshire) and Steven Cruse (Troon PA). Scottish Universities found this mixture a challenging task and despite a commendable competitive spirit went down 3 – 0 in the first match against Caledonia Blues. The second match between the national sides was, as expected, a closer affair, with both teams looking to impressive assistant national team coach Steve Milne who was deputising for Simon Loftus who had volleyball commitments in England. With both teams trading points throughout the match it was the Caledonia Whites, captained by Stuart Edgar, who clinched the bragging rights after bringing themselves back into the match with a 26-24 third set win and then held their nerve in the deciding set with a 15-11 win.

The national players took their momentum into the final match of the day against Scottish Universities who struggled with the speed and power of the opposition. However credit should be given to the students, led by Dundee captain Graeme Spowart, for their competitive spirit and never-say-die approach to the strength of the opposition.

The atmosphere and energy throughout the day at Dundee University was a wonderful advert for the game in Scotland and the young spectators who took the opportunity to see some of the top players in the country left the hall enthused and excited by what they had seen. The tournament offers a unique environment enabling a wide range of talented players to come together and benefit from valuable match experience and thanks are due to players, coaches and officials for contributing to the day's action.