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PERTHSHIRE ADVERTISER

THE BACK PAGE

Silver lining for Cerys

Perth's Cerys Cairns was part of a Scotland netball team that finished second in the SPAR Diamond Challenge in South Africa at the weekend.

Up against the host nation, the Scottish Thistles fell to a 54-36 defeat in Saturday's final – but clinched sliver.

It was a fast-paced match, with both sides achieving several turnovers to the joy of spectators.

Strathclyde Sirens player Cerys said: "It was good to play in big matches and it was great to be a part of that.

"We definitely achieved what we wanted to and brought in younger players.

"We were pleased with how we played."

•Full story on page 46



WORLD CUP MIDFIELDER'S ACHIEVEMENTS REMARKABLE

ALL-TIME GREAT



Praise Callum Davidson and Nick Dasovic, inset

Duo insist Wotherspoon will go down as Saints legend

ROBBIE CHALMERS

Perth-born footballer David Wotherspoon will be welcomed home as a World Cup hero and deserves to be considered one of St Johnstone's greatest ever players.

Those were the eulogising thoughts of his club manager Callum Davidson and Canadian-born Saints legend Nick Dasovic.

Canada kicked off their final Group F game against Morocco at 3pm yesterday, just after the PA was sent for publication, with hopes from David's family and supporters that he could take to the field at the World Cup.

The 32-year-old Bridge of Earn midfielder made Canada's squad for the finals, qualifying to play for them through mum Sheila, but didn't feature in the losses against Belgium or Croatia.

But either way boss Davidson says Wotherspoon can be "very proud" of getting to a World Cup and believes he is already an all-time great Saint.

"He will come back with a spring in his step and his confidence boosted from the experience," he said.

"There have not been many St Johnstone players at World Cups over the years so it's a huge achievement for David and for the club.

"The fact he's from Perth and a fan makes it even better, in my book. You look at his performances for us over the last 10 years and the three trophies he's won.

"For me, he's right up there with the greatest players in St Johnstone's long history. That's taking nothing away from other players who have played for the club but what he's done over the years has been remarkable.

"And being from this area, this is his hometown team, just elevates it and makes it even more special for him and his family."



Dasovic, who spent six years at McDiarmid Park and bagged 63 caps for Canada, is proud to see a homegrown Saint mix with the elite of the world game – even if that's tinged with a little envy.

The 53-year-old said: "When David played his first game for Canada, it was a few years ago and he's come a long way, but I was worried when he suffered the injury.

"So when he was selected, I sent him my congratulations.

"David deserves to be in the group because he did a lot of work beforehand in qualifying to get the team there, so he's been a big part of the squad.

"He's not played a lot because he has some really decent players in front of him.

"I joke with him that if he was playing during my time in the squad he'd have 50 caps in his pocket!

"But it's great to see David and a St Johnstone player in the World Cup.

"It's something I didn't manage to do so it's great to see a kid from Perth who supported St Johnstone as a youngster being involved.

"A taste of the tournament would be great but even just being there and soaking it all in is a great experience."

Meanwhile, the Perth club has drawn holders Rangers in the Scottish Cup fourth round, due to be played at McDiarmid Park on Saturday, January 21.



Inspirational David Wotherspoon

Defender Booth back in the frame

St Johnstone's Callum Booth will be pushing for a starting berth in manager Callum Davidson's line-up against Ross County on December 17.

The left-sided defender has been sidelined since May with an Achilles injury and required an operation during the summer.

But he returned to training with the squad last month and has played some minutes in closed-door games this week.

Booth is delighted to be back and finally put months of frustration and pain behind him.

He said: "You've no idea how good I'm feeling. I've been on a real high.

"I've been training with the lads for the past few weeks and the World Cup break came at the wrong time for me. So, I've had to be even more patient and I couldn't wait to get back this week and get into the action again.



Raring to go Callum Booth

"I've managed to get some really good training sessions in and pull on the jersey in bounce games.

"It's all been positive and I'm heading in the right direction. I'm feeling good.

"My aim is to be ready and available for selection for our first game back, away to Ross County. But I know there is strong competition for places and I can't take anything for granted.

"The lads have been in great form and it's been a pleasure to watch them in action in the past couple of months. When you are sidelined through injury, you are helpless and it can be frustrating.

"But seeing the lads winning and going on an unbeaten run makes it that bit easier and not as painful."

'SHIRE SUFFER AGONY CUP LOSS PAGE 45

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