

LITHUANIA v SCOTLAND TONIGHT, BBC1, 7.15PM

Tartan Army mercy mission

FANS DELIVER £20K TO ORPHANAGE



BIG BANG THEORY . . . blind youngster gets to try out Tartan Army drum

From **GRAEME DONOHUE**, Tartan Army Reporter, in Vilnius, Lithuania

THE Tartan Army carried out a heartwarming mission at an orphanage in Vilnius yesterday — after local press warned our Scots fans are a SECURITY THREAT.

Lithuanian media caused a stir about our fun-lovin' fans when they suggested more cops would have to be drafted in to deal with violence.

But the caring troops showed a softer side and won over the locals by handing more than £20,000 worth of toys and cash to children's homes in Vilnius. *Craig Leavin's Bravehearts take their first step on the road to Euro 2012 in Poland and Ukraine when they face Lithuania tonight in Kaunas.*

But yesterday was all about winning over critics who dubbed the supporters as troublemakers. A kind delegation from the Tartan Army Children's Charity — including Real Radio DJ Cat Harvey — spread a little joy to some of the country's most deprived kids.

Thrilled

The Scottish Football Association-endorsed charity donated £10,000 each to The Centre For The Blind and Children's Care Home Gile in Vilnius.

Some of the cash will be spent building a kitchen where the children can learn to cook — as well as basketball and football pitches.

Charity director Edwardas Javinskas beamed: "We are overjoyed at the generosity of the Scottish football fans."

"The children are so happy to know that there are people in another country who clearly care about them."

There were similar scenes of joy when the kilted troops marched into the children's home to the sound of the bagpipes.

Each youngster was presented with a rucksack containing a toy, pencil case and a Scotland T-shirt.

Eleven-year-old Angelika Peckovicius ran away from home two years ago.

She said: "My step-father was terrible. He used to beat me, my mum and my brother. Almost every day was violence. I had to get away and it is such a relief here."

"We are so excited to see the Scottish people and we can't believe people here that they would help us like this."

Tragic Lena Kacuc, 11, has lived in homes for five years since her six brothers and six sisters were killed in a car crash. She



GIFT . . . Carey hands over shirt



JOY . . . Lena, Angelika & pal



ON SONG . . . the pipers let rip



FRIENDS UNITED . . . Tartan Army at the Gile kids' home

said: "Life has not been easy but the people who run the home are good to us. We have been looking forward to seeing the Scots men. They are kind-hearted."

Cheoky Stanislav Lukjanov, 13, was taken into care five years ago. But he giggled: "This is generous. Thanks, but we will still beat you. Lithuania will win 3-0. This is a happy day. I only see my parents about once a month. They are alcoholics and have a lot of problems."

"They argue all the time so it was better for me to come here. I'm happier now."

TACC patron Cat Harvey was over-

whelmed after seeing the children's faces light up.

She said: "It puts football into perspective and it's great that so many Tartan Army supporters have put their hands in their pockets to raise so much money."

A lot of nonsense has been written about our fans in the local papers but I think this really shows what our fans are all about."

TACC founder Carey McEoy set up the fans' charity in 2003 for a visit to Ukraine.

His boys fans have raised more than £150,000 and has pledged

another £20,000 to kids' homes in the Czech Republic when Scotland travel there next month.

Commercial manager Curry, 38, from Edinburgh, said: "We can only do a small amount but even just a simple thing like a cuddle means so much to these kids."

"It's good to mix charity with football but none of this would be possible if the Tartan Army didn't all unite to dig deep and help out."

To make a donation to the Tartan Army Children's Charity go to tartanarmychildrencharity.org.uk

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TORY COMES TO DEFENCE



Apsidraudė nuo šloktų

EUROPE Minister David Lidington defended the Tartan Army yesterday as Lithuanian media snare spanned a diplomatic row.

After one paper printed a picture of Celtic fans lifting their kilt, lot, and another claimed Rangers fans had caused trouble, the top Tory said: "I have told the Lithuanians that the Tartan Army are famous for their good behaviour."

"Scotland fans are excellent ambassadors for their country and I'm confident they will show why they win friends wherever they travel."



BIRTHDAY BOY . . . Brian

TROOPS SET FOR MARCH TO VICTORY

TARTAN Army troops are on the Euro 2012 march — and confident Scotland will bounce back from last month's handy defeat in Sweden.

Refugee collection worker Brian Mason hopes Craig Leavin's Bravehearts will deliver him the perfect birthday present.

Brian, from Aberdeen, said: "I'm still on the day of the game, so I'm hoping Scotland will help me celebrate properly."

"I reckon the boys will win 2-0 — no problem. I think this is the easy game. The tough one is Czech Republic away next month."

Shop worker Martin Reid, 26, also from Aberdeen, thinks Scotland will scrape a victory in Kaunas.

Martin, above, said: "I'm going for 1-0 Scotland with Kerry Miller getting the winner. I'm pretty confident."

Sweden was a setback, but we'll have a totally different team out there against Lithuania."

"I think Craig Leavin's the man to help us finally qualify for a finals. Let's face it, he couldn't do any worse than George Burley."

Squadie Don McEury, 39, from

Dumfries, is also full of confidence.

Don, above, said: "I think we'll coast if 2-0. We've got lots of players back that wouldn't play for George Burley."

"Sto Davis Wair will do a job for us. The defence against Sweden had only 12 caps between them, but Wair brings lots of experience to steady the ship."

"I'm not worried about his age because he's still good. He's last year's player of the year."

Soldier Craig Dickson, 26, from Edinburgh, is also backing boss Leavin to turn Scotland's fortunes around.

Craig, above, said: "He's a good manager and he won't take any nonsense. You won't get a five-a-side happening under him."

"I'm hopeful we will win 3-1 against Lithuania. Spain will win the group, but we've got enough about us to finish first."

Glasgow-born Derek Campbell, 34, from Luton, thinks Scotland will slip up.

Derek, left, said: "I think we'll be 1-1, but a draw is a solid start."

Taxi driver Alan McBain, 58, from Aberdeen thinks Scotland will win — but only just.

He said: "I think we'll win 2-1. We'll go 2-0 up and they'll score just to make it a nervy finish, but we'll hang on."