

# Ice Hockey – Capitals can still create club history

❌ Challenge Cup, quarter-final, first-leg: Edinburgh Capitals 2, Sheffield Steelers 2

FIRE-UP Edinburgh Capitals are still in the hunt to create club history by qualifying for the final four of the Challenge Cup, but it will take a massive performance when they travel to Sheffield Steelers on Saturday for the second-leg of their quarter-final with the tie finely balanced at 2-2.

The battling Capitals combine were twice ahead in a tense, bruising battle at Murrayfield on Wednesday night before a disappointingly low crowd for such a big game, but Steelers clawed them back thanks to a double from Guillaume Desbiens.

Earlier, coach Michal Dobron's squad were pinned back by the eager Sheffield forward but they refused to buckle and had it not been for some last ditch saves from Steelers' highly-rated goaltender Ervins Mustukovs then they could have been ahead.

Ian Schultz left three Sheffield players in his slipstream with some neat stick handling and he was denied then Jared Staal tested the Latvian netminder.

Mason Wilgosh was next to threaten 6ft 2in Mustukovs after a breakaway and it was no surprise when the home side went behind.

Defenceman Michael D'Orazio made the breakthrough after Matt Tipoff and Schultz had dug the puck out near the goal and fed the Canadian who made no mistake from near the hash marks. Time: 15min 53sec.

Three minutes into the second period Jonathan Phillips tested Capitals' netminder Travis Fullerton and Colton Fretter's snap shot hit a post and was stopped by Fullerton inches from the

line.

But it took until the 33rd minute for Steelers to level, Desbiens converting from a pass by ex-Braehead Clan star Zack Fitzgerald when Capitals failed to clear the puck.

Edinburgh were not to be denied and the outstanding Pavel Vorobyev scored unassisted on the power play to edge the home side ahead for the second time.

But Sheffield silenced home fans with an equaliser less than three minutes from time from Desbiens with Phillips supplying the ammunition in a game in which the home side were outshot 36-29.

But Dobron's men will travel with real hope of springing a major upset if they can produce another gritty performance.

Meanwhile, the Elite League's Department of Player Safety (DOPS) has banned Braehead Clan forward Corey Cowick for six games for abuse of officials.

Cowick was handed a 10 minute personal misconduct penalty after bumping into the referee during Braehead's league game in Manchester on Saturday night.

After DOPS reviewed the video evidence and considered the referees report Cowick's penalty has been upgraded to match penalty for abuse of officials.

This penalty carries an automatic tariff of six games with one of them being at Murrayfield on Sunday face-off 6pm).

And Belfast Giants former Edinburgh Capitals forward David Rutherford has been banned for two matches for checking to the head. The incident occurred during Sunday night's game in Sheffield.