

Ice hockey – Stars dimmed by Lefebvre still upbeat

Third place play-off: Dundee Stars 8, Belfast Giants 15. Play-off semi-final: Dundee Stars 2, Cardiff Devils 4 (both games at Nottingham)

Former Edinburgh Capitals star Marc Lefebvre praised his squad, the fans and the owners of Dundee Stars after their play-off campaign ending in disappointment.

They were beaten 4-2 in the semi-finals by Cardiff Devils and lost 15-8 to Belfast Giants in the third and fourth place play-off.

Stars coach Lefebvre, whose low-budget squad came with a late surge to clinch seventh spot at the end of the regular season, said his men deserved to be there.

He recalled that many had written his team off in January and the Canadian said: “Yes, we’re disappointed at not making the final as we came here to win.

“And we pushed a great Cardiff team, who have quality in depth, all the way. I could not be more proud of my team.”

Dundee fans dreamed when the fired-up Tayside team, classed as rank outsiders for the title, led the Welsh side 2-0 after 18 minutes but then the newly-crowned Elite League champions upped a gear.

They blasted four unanswered goals past Joe Fallon in the Dundee net for a 4-2 victory.

Goaltender Fallon, who has been outstanding for Stars this season, was the Man of the Match and Lefebvre said: “This has been a great experience for us all.

“We made a great start but they have four lines running at you

and that is why they are (league) champions.”

In the game nicknamed The Hangover Cup, the sides were locked at 4-4 after the first session with Vinny Scarsella opening the scoring after five minutes and further Dundee goals coming from Mikael Lidhammar, Craig Moore and Kevin Bruijsten.

Blair Riley, David Rutherford, Ryan Martinelli and Glasgow-born Colin Shields scored for Belfast.

Seven goals hit the net in the middle session, Matt White and Joey Sides for Stars and Matt Towe, Rutherford twice, Chris Higgins and Mike Quesnele for the opposition.

Belfast kept their foot on the gas in the third with Jim Vandermeer, Michael Forney, Martinelli, Shields, Forney again and Adam Keefe netting. Justin Faryna scored twice for stars.