

Ice hockey – Khristich looking up after snuffing out Blaze



Action courtesy of Ian Coyle from a recent Capitals clash at Murrayfield

Dmitri Khristich has gone from the high life in the world's top ice hockey league to rock bottom of the Elite League.

It's a journey that the Ukraine-born ex-player obviously did not envisage when he signed the contract to coach low-budget Edinburgh Capitals.

They anchor the 12-strong table with only four points from 16 games and the former National Hockey League right-winger has lost five players since the start of the season.

Top scorer Marek Tvrdon was released from his contract this week and his departure is the fifth since the start of the season, joining Taylor Stefishen, Duncan Spiers, Julius Nyqvist and Alexander Islamov in moving on.

Khristich takes his short-benched squad to ninth-placed Braehead Clan on Saturday (7pm) and Capitals will miss the scoring prowess of winger Tvrdon who netted 11 goals and claimed ten assists in 18 appearances to be second in the club's individual points charts.

The Murrayfield side lost 5-3 on their last visit to Glasgow. What's more, Braehead are on a roll having won their last four games and are one of the two form teams in the league.

Nottingham Panthers have the best recent record with six straight wins but Capitals travel with confidence boosted from a 5-2 home win over eighth-placed Coventry Blaze last Sunday.

Khristich said the win came at the right time for his squad but refused to get carried away.

The 48-year-old, who played for Washington Capitals, Los Angeles Kings, Boston Bruins and Toronto Maple Leafs, wants to see a similar performance from his depleted squad.

The demanding former Soviet Union international said: "To win one game is nothing, you have to do that again and again.

"We also have to believe in ourselves and if we do then we can earn points."

His opposite number, John Tripp, however wants to extend his winning run and will hope to score early. Capitals have tended to fold this season when they have gone behind.

Elsewhere, former Dundee Stars player Justin Faryna hopes to help wounded Cardiff Devils snap a three-game losing streak when they visit Fife Flyers (face-off 7.15pm), the side which came from 5-1 down last Saturday to win 8-6 in Wales but Devils won 5-3 on their last visit to Rosslyn Street.

And Faryna's former Dundee team-mates are desperate to edge league newcomers Guildford Flames (face-off 7pm) and close in on the pack.

Currently, the Tayside team are second-bottom of the table with 13 points from 16 starts while tenth-placed Guildford, who won 3-2 after overtime on their last visit, have 17 points from the same number of games.