

Ice hockey – Dutiaume looks to slay Giants



Todd Dutiaume looking for response from his players and the fans

Fife Flyers head coach Todd Dutiaume is desperate to land silverware for the club's success-hungry fans.

And high-flying Belfast Giants provide a formidable obstacle to Fife's progress in the Challenge Cup.

The first-leg of the mouth-watering quarter-final takes place at The Fife Ice Arena tonight (SAT, 7.15pm) and Dutiaume wants to be in the game for the return at the Odyssey on Tuesday, January 9.

Fife are on form having won their last four league games and they come into the match-up on the back of a 5-2 home win over Milton Keynes Lightning.

Top points gatherer Peter LeBlanc netted twice with singles from Chase Schaber, Ričards Birziņš and James Isaacs.

And Dutiaume is pleased with the way his men have approached recent games after snapping out of what he described as a "lull".

This, however, is a step-up as Belfast Giants currently lead the 12-strong Elite League with 33 points from 25 games. Fife are seventh but have played six less games. They have 26 points.

Dutiaume revealed that the club have "changed a number of things" and the squad mentally and physically challenged themselves recently.

The attitude change was rewarded and Dutiaume said that for the first 40 minutes of the game against Milton Keynes the squad played exceptionally well.

And the second period, he said, was one of the club's best of the year so far.

They will have to produce the same performance against Belfast – who have already won 4-2 at Rosslyn Street in the league – and he said: “The guys did well and they were rewarded for their efforts.”

The experienced Canadian has called for a huge team effort against Belfast.

And he wants the crowd to make themselves heard during a key game for Fife this season.

He said: “The team and the crowd were together on the same page (against Milton Keynes).”

Dutiaume called on the club's fans to replicate that atmosphere against Giants who carry real firepower.

Sebastien Sylvestre tops their points charts with 45 including 17 goals with Brendan Connolly is only four behind.

Then comes Glasgow-born Colin Shields with 35 points from 15 goals and 20 assists.

Elsewhere on Saturday, ninth-placed Braehead Clan face Guildford Flames, who are sixth, (face-off 7pm) and the Scots hold a 3-2 win over the Surrey side in Glasgow earlier this season.

Flames won 8-5 against Clan on their own rink but Clan are desperate to snap a depressing three games losing streak.