

Hockey – Neave focuses on beating the drop



Inverleith set to re-start the outdoor season after victory in the indoor campaign

Stuart Neave praised his jubilant Inverleith squad after regaining the Scottish indoor hockey title and he now focuses on moving the outdoor team off the bottom of Division One.

The Edinburgh-based side have only earned one point from their ten games since being promoted from Division Two.

And they have a goal difference of minus 32, the worst in the ten-strong division.

Inverleith trail second-bottom Uddingston by six points with eighth-placed Clydesdale on nine points along with Hillhead who have a superior goal difference and are seventh.

Inverleith's first game outdoors is scheduled for Saturday, February 24 against city rivals Edinburgh University at Peffermill. The students are fifth in the table with 13 points.

It's a massive ask for Kinross-based Neave and the squad but he hopes that the confidence gained from the indoor league will rub off.

Neave said: "I'm absolutely delighted with the team's performance in the Grand Final on Saturday and throughout the (indoor) season."

Inverleith beat Kelburne 5-2 at Perth in the indoor final and the West of Scotland combine did not use a goalkeeper, preferring to have six outfield players which included a kicking-back.

Neave conceded: "It is always awkward to play against six outfield players, but we defended really well on Saturday and kept the scoreboard ticking over in our favour.

"The achievement is even more remarkable given the changes to personnel this season.

"We have an average age of 22 and only one player over 30 (former Olympian Stephen Dick) and that is a real credit to the squad."

Inverleith now move into Europe next season and Neave said: "It is an exciting prospect , but with it comes the challenge of raising funds for the trip.

"Now it is back to outdoor hockey with a slightly different challenge."