

# Ice hockey – Nickerson banned for 20 games



Goal action from Murrayfield earlier in the season against Cardiff Devils courtesy of Ian Coyle

Edinburgh Capitals on Sunday host a Milton Keynes Lightning squad minus former Fife Flyers defenceman Matt Nickerson who has been handed a 20-game ban.

The 6ft 4in, tough-as-teak blue-liner, who played more than 80 games for Fife over two seasons, was handed a six-match penalty for abusing officials.

And the American was given a 14-game penalty for punching a fan in the head during Lightning's Elite League clash at Guildford Flames on Sunday.

The incident happened at the end of the game and disciplinary chiefs said the 33-year-old former Dallas Stars draft pick Nickerson left the players bench to enter the area of the incident.

A spokesman said: "Believing that the game is finished is not a reason for any player to leave the players bench to engage in a physical altercation, and Nickerson received two match penalties for his actions during the ensuing altercation.

"Nickerson did not follow instructions from the game officials and physically broke free of the linesman to try to engage an opposing player on multiple occasions.

"While stepping off the ice, Nickerson begins a winding up motion with his right arm.

"Unsuspecting to the fan who is located behind the gate,

Nickerson delivers a forceful backhand punch directly to the head of the fan."

The statement added: "Fighting off the ice surface does not have the same rules as fighting on the ice surface and hitting a fan off the ice surface is treated with an entirely different level of severity.

"At no time is a player allowed to engage with a fan.

"It is the responsibility of the player not to make physical contact with a fan.

"In this case, Nickerson engaged and physical demeaned the fan of his own free will.

"As a result of these actions, the Elite League Department of Player Safety has suspended Matt Nickerson for 14 games for engaging with a spectator."

Nickerson has now been released by Milton Keynes.