

Ice hockey – Chalmers praises team and fans on eve of Challenge Cup clash

Glasgow Clan boss Gareth Chalmers eyed Friday's (7.30pm) Challenge Cup, quarter-final, first-leg clash at Dundee Stars and said: "We're turning heads around the league."

Clan's chief operating officer would love to see his men in the final four of the national competition.

And he said it was fantastic to see the club at the top of the Elite League, beating teams with bigger budgets on a regular basis.

In a message to fans, Chalmers added: "The team have been an absolute joy to watch this season, certainly some of the most entertaining hockey I've witnessed since joining the Clan."

He added: "We came off a very difficult period two seasons ago. We assessed, we learned, we planned, we restructured, we made changes and we're progressing."

The boss praised first-season head coach Zack Fitzgerald and the new-look squad and said: "We set out early on building from where we had finished last season.

"We wanted a certain brand of hockey, one that would be entertaining every night. The guys are delivering that."

Chalmers also saluted the club's fans who, he said, make Braehead an intimidating place to visit for opposing teams and

he claimed: "The atmosphere at our home games is the best in the country."

Meanwhile, Dundee Stars' coach Omar Pacha has also stressed the importance of fans on the eve of the mouth-watering Challenge Cup clash.

The Canadian urged success-hungry supporters to get behind his players when they entertain Clan.

Stars won home (7-2) and away (6-3) against Clan in the Challenge Cup group phase and Pacha would love to claim a historic ever semi-final spot for the Tayside team.

Pacha selected their Scottish rivals as their opposition in the last eight because he believes his men have enjoyed success against the Braehead combine this term.

He added: "We had success against them (Clan) in the Challenge Cup group phase and we took full points from them in the league.

"It is also a good opportunity to push the rivalry and an opportunity for our fans to come out in numbers here and it is a quick trip over there (to Glasgow)."

The coach added: "The game on Friday will be the biggest game of the season so far for us, without doubt.

"I can't stress enough how important it is to have your support. It gives the players a massive boost seeing the stands full and helps drive us forward when in the battle of the game."