

Dundee Stars carry Scottish hopes in Premier Sports Elite League semi-finals

Super Swede Seb Bengtsson was the toast of Tayside after firing a glory treble in eight sensational minutes to take low-budget Dundee Stars into only the second play-off semi-final in their history. They are the only Scottish club remaining in the Premier Sports-backed competition.

Dundee, sponsored by Kitmart, shocked fans in The House of Steel by winning the first-leg in Sheffield on Saturday 1-0 thanks to a Bengtsson goal less than three minutes from time, but found themselves 3-0 down after 21 minutes in the City of Discovery to big spending Sheffield Steelers, runners-up in the ten-strong Elite League, in the second leg.

Unfancied Stars now go to Nottingham this weekend after their 4-3 comeback win on the night in The Dundee Ice Arena and a 5-3 victory overall in the tie.

Bengtsson, making his British debut this season, opened his account in the 53rd minute to drag Stars back to 3-2 down on the night and levelled the game with 1min 05sec left.

And the pint-sized Stockholm-born left wing, who is only 5ft 8in tall, put the home side 4-3 ahead on the night and 5-3 on aggregate with an unassisted empty net strike with 21 seconds remaining to raise the roof at The Dundee Ice Arena.

Stars, founded in 2001, have only made the final four once, in 2017, and were beaten 4-2 by Cardiff Devils after being 2-0 ahead early on.

The Tayside team's coach, Omar Pacha, said they were massive underdogs after the quarter-final pairing with Steelers was

confirmed, but Bengtsson's late strike in The House of Steel gave them renewed belief and set up the drama in Dundee.

Earlier, Sheffield moved into a 3-0 lead thanks to goals from Marc-Olivier Vallerand after nine and 14 minutes and a third by Martin Latal only 59 seconds into the middle session.

But the Tayside team replied through Kalvis Ozols after being set up by Charlie Combs and Man of the Match Bengtsson in the 38th minute.

And with the clock running down, Bengtsson netted a second for Stars with Combs and Kyle Haas (cor) involved in the build-up to level the tie on aggregate with less than eight minutes left.

And he popped in his third with 58min 55sec on the clock, this time on a power play, to level on the night at 3-3 and put the home side ahead on aggregate before he finally cut down Steelers with an empty net goal on 59min 39sec.

Elsewhere, two third-period goals on Sunday sent ambitious Glasgow Clan, sponsored by Aspray Glasgow West, spinning out of the Elite League play-offs.

The Scots were 1-0 down in the first-leg in The Principality on Saturday, but a double from Nolan LaPorte with Colin Campbell and Guillaume Gauthier claiming singles earned a 4-3 victory.

Last night, they held that slender lead until 47min 41sec when Jake Coughler scored and Devils netted a second from Trevor Cox with less than three minutes left to stun the Purple Army in the 3,327 crowd.

That was enough to take Devils, runners-up in the Challenge Cup to Belfast Giants, to Nottingham next weekend for the semi-finals.

Meanwhile, Guildford Flames are in the play-off semi-final for

only the second time having led for only 2min 49sec over 120 minutes in their play-off quarter-final with Nottingham Panthers.

And Belfast Giants kept their Grand Slam hopes alive with a dramatic shootout success over Coventry Blaze at the SSE Arena, J J Piccinich (cor) netting the winning penalty shot in round ten after the sides were locked at 1-1 in regulation time having drawn the first-leg 2-2 in the Midlands on Saturday.

Elite League play-off, quarter-final, second-leg: Dundee Stars 4, Sheffield Steelers 3 (agg: 5-3); Nottingham Panthers 3, Guildford Flames 3 (agg: 6-7); Belfast Giants 3, Coventry Blaze 3 (agg: 3-3, Giants win on penalty shots); Glasgow Clan 0, Cardiff Devils 2 (agg: 4-5)
