

Edinburgh University could make BUCS history with victory over Oxford Brookes

Hamish Imrie and his talented Edinburgh University team have a chance to make Scottish hockey history on Wednesday (1pm, Peffermill) if they beat Oxford Brookes.

Victory would mean that the the club would play in the top British student league and no other student team from North of the Border has ever done that.

Player/coach Imrie (pictured) and his squad go into the Premier National play-off having lost their Scottish Cup semi-final to unfancied Hillhead 3-2 after being 2-0 ahead in Glasgow on Sunday.

That disappointment came 24-hours after the students clinched third place in Scotland's men's Premiership with a 6-1 victory over city rivals Watsonians at Peffermill.

The 25-year-old playcaller claimed fatigue caught up with the squad on Sunday but added: "We're determined to make history." Edinburgh claimed this promotion chance after finishing top of the North League in Division Two of the competition run by British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS), winning five matches, drawing two and losing one.

They missed out on being promoted to the top tier last week

when they were edged by Oxford who won the South League in Division Two, but get a second chance against Oxford Brookes who finished second bottom of the top division.

Imrie admitted that is a big difference between the standard in the first and second division, but the Scottish international, who has played hockey in Holland, Belgium and Germany, remains optimistic and declared: "We suffered heartbreak last week in losing on penalty strokes to Oxford. We were 2-2 at the end of regulation time after Oxford levelled late on, and we went down 4-1 on penalties.

"However, I'm confident the boys will put that and Sunday's Scottish Cup disappointment behind them and win on this occasion. No other Scottish university men's team has ever been in the top division and we want to be there."

Edinburgh-born Imrie, who went to Fettes College as a youngster, has already tasted success this season, leading his men to a 1-0 victory over Birmingham University's first XI at Nottingham to claim the BUCS Vase, the student Edinburgh-born captain Robbie Croll netting the game-winner, so they know how to win on a big occasion.

And the Scottish international said: "Edinburgh University women have been in their top tier under coach Sam Judge and we're looking to emulate that. We would love to achieve that in front of our home crowd and would love a big crowd to be there to cheer us on. We believe we have the quality to gain a positive result."

Set-pieces could be crucial and Inverness-born Iain McFadden, a geo-physics student, has been effective in that department this season, so has chemistry student Croll, a Scottish international, and the team is back-stopped by highly-rated, Nottingham-born goalkeeper Martin Rose, who is reading history, who has had a really good season.

Imrie believes solid defence will be crucial and added: "The

boys are really up for this. Oxford Brookes are a good side, but the 2-2 result at the end of normal time against Oxford last week shows we can compete at a high level against the best university teams in the country.

“This is our second bite at the cherry and we need to take our chances. We made plenty on Sunday against Hillhead but failed to take them and, if we can create as we did then, we will be going up.”

Confident Imrie declared: “We’ve not practiced penalty strokes as I’m confident we’ll win in normal time.”