

Grange captain relishing the prospect of playing top sides in EuroHockey Ranking Cup in Spain

David Forrester captains Grange against “world-class” opposition in the EuroHockey League Ranking Cup and the 32-year-old said it was crucial that Grange maintain the intensity they showed in the first quarter of their last domestic game against Dunfermline Carnegie at Fettes College on Saturday, when they raced to a 5-0 scoreline, throughout the tournament in Terrassa.

Grange open against Waterloo Ducks, who, in 2019, became the first Belgian side to win the EuroHockey League, in their opening game on Friday (18.45) in Terrassa, the last game of the first day, and, depending on the result, face either German combine Mannheimer, who play in Germany’s top league, or London side Hampstead & Westminster, English champions in 2019, and who play at Maida Vale, one of the Capital’s most exclusive residential areas, known for its elegant Victorian houses and near the Little Venice waterway.

Reflecting on their last competitive outing, Forrester admitted that Grange dropped their game after the first quarter, only scoring two more goals with one in reply, in winning 7-1 against Dunfermline Carnegie to maintain their pressure on league pace-setters Western in the race for the men’s Premiership title in Scotland.

The Grange squad will, argued Forrester, need to maintain a high level of play for the entire game against Waterloo Ducks and for the remainder of the tournament.

If Grange failed to maintain that level they will be

punished, but Forrester argued that it will be easier to maintain a high level in a game in Europe against one in Scotland as it was mission accomplished against Dunfermline Carnegie with the game in the bag at half-time.

Scottish international Forrester has two other national squad players in his roster, Duncan Riddell and Gordon Amour, and the goalkeeper said: "It is good to have Duncan and Gordon and myself who have played international hockey, but there are other guys in the team who have played in the EuroHockey League so they know what the competition is like and what the pressure will be.

"However, it is up to us, the more experienced players to take that pressure and help the younger guys as we do have a young team."

Forrester is realistic about their chances of causing an upset and sending shock waves throughout Europe, and argued that going into the tournament is more about the young players gaining experience at that level and building on that for the club in the future.

He said: "This is another step in their development and I am sure they will gain a lot from it. I'm not looking beyond the game against Waterloo Ducks. We want to go out there and show we can compete at that level. If we concede a goal we need to get over it and think about the next action and not dwell on any mistakes. We must keep the intensity high."

Club coaches have warned the squad not to attempt any champagne passes or unnecessary plays and not to turn over the ball in their own defensive area and the goalkeeper stressed: "We must make Waterloo Ducks earn their victory.

"Forrester has first-hand knowledge of the Belgian cracks having played against them, and he knows several of the players having played club hockey in France.

He said: "Belgian teams are typically very skilful with great hands and they like to play fast-flowing hockey. The challenge for us is to keep our structure and limit them in what they can do, and not allow them to play fast-flowing hockey."

PICTURE: Action from Grange v Dunfermline Carnegie at Fettes on Saturday by ***Nigel Duncan***