

Western coach dedicates Premiership win to club volunteers

Coach Vishal Marwaha paid tribute to the volunteers who helped Western regain the men's Premiership title for the first time in 18 years and his men did it in style with a magnificent seven goals after going 1-0 down after six minutes.

The Glasgow side are now on course for a domestic Grand Slam having already won the indoor title and qualified for the final of the Scottish Cup next month against city rivals Hillhead.

Andrew McConnell netted three and Adam MacKenzie a double in the 7-2 victory at Auchenhowie over Edinburgh side Grange with skipper Rob Harwood a single with 38-year-old, ex-Kelburne striker, Jonny Christie, completed the scoring in the dying minutes with a trademark finish.

Albert Rowling and Peter Caughey scored for Grange and Marwaha, a former player for Western, admitted: "It has been a long journey for us and we've looked at the junior set-up and the way we build. A lot of people have to take a lot of credit for this as it has been a long time coming."

The future looks bright and he added: "If you look beyond Gavin (Sommerville) and Jonny Christie the rest of the squad are mid-20's and below so we have the corps of a really good team. The younger players have really stepped-up.

"You really need a good squad to win and that is what Grange have shown us. In the last three or four seasons, if they loose players they have others to step in."

He praised the Edinburgh side for pushing them all the way

and Marwaha urged his men not to drop their intensity with the Grand Slam in sight.

The end-to-end game played under a blue sky with a cooling wind was level going into the final quarter but Western fired five goals in 13 minutes to claim the silverware.

Martin Shepherdson, Grange's team manager, said his depleted squad, missing three key men including Scotland's top marksman this term, Fraser Heigh, played well but were tired after coming seventh out of eight clubs in the EuroHockey Ranking Cup in Spain last weekend.

He said: "You could see it in their legs. We competed really well for three-quarters of the game and we could have been ahead as we had a couple of really good chances which we did not put on target.

"However, in the final quarter, Western showed some class and they deserve everything they have got over the season, but I am proud of the guys to come back from Europe with a short turnaround."

Shepherdson acknowledged that the two quick goals in quarter two, the first after a penalty corner breakdown and the second from a penalty stroke, both scored by Andrew McConnell, the failure to convert a penalty stroke at a crucial time and then a missed chance on a breakaway were significant.

Shepherdson said: "I do not want to single out anybody as everybody put in a great effort and played really well. Everybody worked hard and in the end three injuries and one unavailability did not help us. With really only 14 players it was a really good effort and the guys did really well."
