

Lawrence believes Fife Flyers have a great future

Chris Lawrence admitted to being nervous when he stepped back on the ice in a competitive game in Britain earlier this month after suffering a broken ankle playing for the Kirkcaldy club last February.

The 35-year-old worked with the strength coach at Melbourne Mustangs in Australia, where he was coach, with mobility the key area and he prepared his body “pretty well” for the testing time he knew was around the corner when he put pen to paper for a second spell with Fife Flyers.

The former Dundee Stars captain – he played 16 games for them in the 2017-18 season – was pitched right in – Fife’s associate coach, Jeff Hutchins said he manned-up – and Lawrence said: “This is a pretty physical game and this is a situation where I was called upon and I responded.

“There is a great club here with a great future and some really good players and it made it easier for me to make my comeback.”

Toronto-born Lawrence has had time to assess the current squad and said: “I like our squad this year and we are more talented than last year. We have brought in dynamic, strong players and our defence is a lot better.

“Of course, Shane Owen, our goaltender, continues to be outstanding and, overall, I like the make-up of our club as we have a lot of older guys plus some younger guys.”

Manchester Storm visit on Saturday (19.15) and Fife then face a long trip to in-form Coventry on Sunday (17.30) as the Kingdom club open their Elite League campaign.

Lawrence (picture courtesy of Fife Flyers) knows the British game well having also played for Nottingham Panthers, Coventry Blaze and Sheffield Steelers, said: "Manchester always play hard and they are gritty. The Storm Shelter (in Manchester) is always difficult so we have to take care of business here.

"When you go into places like Manchester, which are a little smaller, play is quicker with bodies flying around. It is pretty physical, but I believe we have a group which can adapt to any situation."

Last weekend, for example, against Belfast Giants, a club tipped for honours again this season, Fife had guys, who usually play 20 minutes, stepping up to 25, some guys 30 minutes, to cover for missing players who are sidelined with injuries.

Experienced Lawrence said: "When you play those type of minutes fatigue sets in but you could see the character, the guys would not give up and there is no quit in that dressing-room.

"It is a fun thing to be a part of because as you are giving your all the the guy next to you is doing the same. Fife Flyers is a good place to be right now."

Coventry, he said, have had a great start to the season. That is underlined by their Elite League results, a 6-1 road win at Nottingham Panthers backed by a 2-1 success against the same team at The Skydome plus a 5-4 win at Manchester after overtime.

They also won 4-1 against Cardiff Devils in the Challenge Cup at home last Sunday and posted a 4-2 success over Sheffield pre-season.

The Canadian-born forward acknowledged that Blaze are on fire, but he said: "We are a confident squad.

“We are looking forward to having all the fans in the arena on Saturday to give us big time energy (against Manchester). We are grateful that we have them.

“We are all aware that the fans have not seen us win at home (so far this season), but it has been tough as we’ve been short-benched.

“The guys have given it their all and that’s all you can ask for in a situation like that.”

He added: “We did really well going into a hostile atmosphere in Belfast and I felt it could have gone in our favour but things happen. We got a point out of the game.

“We are looking forward to adding bodies to the squad this weekend, players that are injured right now, and, once all the pieces are in place, I think we will be formidable.”