

Phillips treble takes Fife into Challenge Cup semi-final

Viaplay Challenge Cup, quarter-final, second-leg: Fife Flyers 5, Dundee Stars 4 (agg: 9-8). Fife Flyers win after penalty shots.

Man of the Match Zack Phillips guided injury-hit Fife Flyers into the final four of the Viaplay Challenge Cup for the first time when the Kirkcaldy club earned a narrow victory on home ice after penalty shots against a dogged and determined Dundee Stars combine.

Phillips claimed a hat-trick and he also slotted the crucial penalty shot but it looked, however, that Dundee's dominance over their near neighbours would continue.

They were 3-1 ahead in games between the arch rivals so far this term ahead of the clash and Stars held a slender one-goal lead moving into the final two minutes.

But a late strike to level at 4-4 and then ice cool nerves saw Fife home but, earlier, the second-leg started badly for the home side against Stars who have twice won on Kirkcaldy ice this term.

The visitors edged ahead after only four minutes when Christopher Lidjsman netted unassisted but Flyers were back on level terms seven minutes later.

Phillips converted on the power play with Elijah Barriga in the penalty box for interference after being set up by Dillon Lawrence and Christian Hausinger.

But the tables were turned four minutes later when Janne Kivilahti was sent to the sin bin for tripping and Carter Folk made the home side pay with Dundee's second of the night with Johan Eriksson and Benjamin Sokay involved.

And the Tayside team went 3-1 ahead with Barriga was set up by Romans Semjonovs and Phillipe Sanche after 33 minutes only for Fife to net their second 32 seconds later through Phillips, his second of the night, Janne Laakkonen and Chris Lawrence assisting.

Stars had outshot Fife 26-16, but it was still all to play for after the 4-4 draw at The Dundee Ice Arena seven days ago, Stars twice coming from two goals down to level against a short-benched combine.

And Fife levelled after 44 minutes when that man Phillips finished off a move involving Brayden Sherbinin and Laakkonen to set up a nail-biting final 16 minutes.

Dundee kept pushing forward and they capitalised when Mikael Johansson was called for high sticking. Eriksson slotted after being fed by Ryan Verrier to edge the Tayside team ahead 4-3 with the clock on 47min 45sec.

It looked as if Stars would hold out but Fife snatched a late leveller 1min 8sec from time. It was defenceman Brayden Sherbinin who did the damage by levelling with Phillips in the thick of the action with an assist after goaltender Shane Owen had been withdrawn giving Fife an extra skater.

That goal took this eight-goal thriller into nerve-jangling, sudden death overtime and they still could not be separated. On to penalty shots which decided the outcome.

LIBRARY PICTURE: by Al Goold