

Phillips wants Challenge Cup triumph to fire-up Flyers

Zack Phillips enjoyed the adulation of the Fife Flyers faithful when his sudden-death penalty shot bulged the net and took the Kirkcaldy club into their first semi-final in the Viaplay Challenge Cup.

But the razor-sharp right-wing or centre ice from Fredericton, Canada, who has iced for teams in Slovakia, Poland and Germany, before arriving in Scotland, admitted: "We did not play a full 60 (minutes) which we wanted to.

The modest player was more concerned with helping the Wolseley-backed team make club history than personal glory and he declared: "It is always fun to score goals and to help the team win."

Claiming a place in the final four of the first major of the ice hockey season is, said the 30-year-old forward, a big thing in the dressing-room then the former first round draft pick, 28th overall, by National Hockey League side, Minnesota Wild, in 2011, looked at the up-coming games against Nottingham Panthers, a side vying with Flyers for sixth place in the ten-strong Elite League.

Panthers come to Kirkcaldy on Saturday (19.15) and Fife travel to the Midlands on Sunday (18.00) and they have 18 points from 21 games while Fife, who currently occupy eighth position, the

final play-off spot, have 16 points but from 24 fixtures.

Four points from the weekend would certainly boost spirits further in the dressing-room and move Flyers up the table if results go their way elsewhere. A maximum point weekend would also be welcomed, not just on the ice, but with Flyers success-hungry fans.

Phillips hopes Flyers can carry the winning feeling over to Saturday's home game with Panthers (face-off 19.15) and added: "We are a good team when we are playing well, but we must find a way to put our game together for 60 minutes. We also have good players."

Fife's associate coach, Jeff Hutchins, was delighted that his men found a way to win the two-leg cup tie, particularly as Fife were staring down the barrel with two minutes left at Kirkcaldy on Wednesday.

The coaching staff gambled by withdrawing netminder Shane Owen and the ploy worked as the home side levelled through defenceman Brayden Sherbinin with 1min 8sec left on the clock in regulation time, sending the nail-biting game into sudden-death overtime and then penalty shots. Phillips assisted on the crucial strike in a game in which Fife were outshot 33-26 overall.

Hutchins, a former Dundee player/coach, said: "We are extremely happy that we came through it as a group. However, if we look ourselves in the mirror, and were honest with ourselves, we did not play our best hockey especially in the first two periods (on Wednesday) which is disappointing.

"Full credit to the guys they stuck with it and we scored a power play goal which is important for us and has been a struggle and a frustration for everyone.

"And they executed six-on-five with a minute left which is a credit to them. It was not our best game by a country mile but

a lot of things are factored into that.

“We have been on the other end of some close results recently and I am happy we are on the other side.”