

# Hockey – Watsonians close in on double triumph, but students are determined to spoil the party

In-form Watsonians, the newly-crowned women's Premiership winners, cruised into the play-off final with a 4-0 victory over Clydesdale Western at Glasgow's National Hockey Centre.

There they will meet Capital rivals Edinburgh University who beat Western Wildcats 5-2 in their play-off semi-final thanks to a treble from medical student Jika Nyirenda, two of them from penalty strokes.

The mouth-watering game against the sides which finished No 1 and No 2 in the table is relished by Sam Judge, the students coach, who declared: "We want to be No 1."

The university side went 2-0 ahead in the second quarter after a stuffy first session with Nyirenda netting from the middle of the D near the start of the session and, with less than five minutes remaining, sending the ball low to the right from the penalty shot spot and giving the goalkeeper no chance for No 2.

Western refused to lie down and netted twice from identical penalty corner moves in the dying seconds of the session, but Judge revealed that her players have worked hard on mental strength this season and it showed.

Scottish international Louise Campbell netted the third after a fine ball from Amy Brodie who had driven forward after picking the ball up in midfield and the same player fired them 4-2 ahead early in the third quarter, smashing the ball home from an acute angle on the right. The goalkeeper had no

chance.

The fifth arrived after former Scottish international Kaz Cuthbert was in the sin bin on a yellow card and the students bore down on the opposition looking for more.

After Cuthbert returned Western removed their goalkeeper and the students claimed that Nyirenda had deflected a high ball into the empty net. The officials disagreed.

But pressure told and that resulted in a penalty stroke. The goalkeeper returned but Nyirenda did the business again, this time firing home to the left.

Judge said she was disappointed that Wildcats were allowed back into the game but happy that her squad had found the will to win again.

She argued that their new resilience saw them through and admitted that they may have lost that game had then not been working on their mental strength.

There were aspects the coaching staff would look at overnight, she said, but Judge's charges beat Watsonians 4-2 recently and she desperately seeks another win.

Judge said: "Sunday is another day and another game, but the girls are buzzing and they want to win the play-off. We want that No 1 place for Europe"

Earlier, two goals in a minute in the final quarter finally killed off Clydesdale Western, but the Edinburgh side's coach, Keith Smith, believed his squad were in control after they established a 2-0 lead.

He was aware of Clydesdale's style and they certainly pressed early on, looking for an opening, but he adapted his tactics to suit and the Capital combine did have their chances.

For example, Ailsa Small was fed by lively Sarah Jamieson and

found herself one-on-one with the Clydesdale goalkeeper who blocked with her pads.

Watsonians grew into the game and edged ahead with only three minutes remaining of the opening quarter, Jamieson picking up the ball on the left and the Scottish international made a darting run into the D. She kept her composure to slot home.

With eight minutes left of the second quarter a mistake in the Clydesdale Western rearguard allowed their rivals to press down the right and a switch pass to unmarked Katie MacCallum allowed the player to be one-on-one with the opposition goalkeeper. She slotted low into the net.

The scoreline remained that way after the third quarter. Small had a chance close in but failed to connect with the ball after MacCallum sent the ball square across the D.

Watsonians were under pressure in parts of the fourth quarter as they attempted to manage the game, but they broke to claim their third which proved decisive. Jamieson was again involved, finding herself in space on the right hand side of the D and remaining ice cool to calmly slot the ball low into the net.

And seconds later it was MacCallum who netted No 4, making no mistake from mid-way inside the D. Game over.

Watsonians will now face either Edinburgh University or Western Wildcats in the play-off final in Glasgow on Sunday (2pm) and Smith said that he knew Clydesdale would ask his team questions.

Of particular concern pre-match were Clydesdale's midfield pair of Bronwyn Shields and Millie Steiger and the coach praised the work of Mairi Drummond who help clamp down on the influence of the Scotland pair.

Overall, his goalkeeping pair of Lucy Camiln and Ruby Crawford

had little to do, Camlin using her pads to block an early Clydesdale effort and Crawford blocking a shot near the end of the game.

Smith underlined the fact that his squad had targeted a European slot and he said: "This is a bonus as we achieved that European place by winning the Premiership.

"We knew Clydesdale would create problems for us, with Shields and Steiger central to them in midfield, but Mairi was exceptional and adapted to help cut down their threat and I felt we were in control of the game.

"The third goal by Sarah certainly killed the game but we defended well and these are games that the girls want to play in as they are super competitive."

PICTURE: Watsonians after their play-off win in Glasgow by ***Nigel Duncan***