

Clydesdale sitting pretty after edging Watsonians

Clydesdale coach Ciaran Crawford was beaming after his squad edged Watsonians 2-1 in an entertaining, high tempo, tussle in Edinburgh to claim the club's second win of the new campaign following their 1-0 home success over Uddingston in the opening round of hockey fixtures.

They moved onto six points thanks to goals from Ian King and Andy McAllan which gave them a 2-0 lead at The University of Edinburgh Playing Fields, Peffermill, but former Great Britain squad player, Dan Coultas, pulled one back for the Capital combine in the final quarter from a penalty corner.

Watsonians, with new signing Duncan Riddell, a former pupil at George Watson's College, in their squad after his move across the city from champions Grange, mounted wave upon wave of assaults on the Clydesdale rearguard as the clock ticked down in a frantic final quarter.

But the West of Scotland club held firm and Crawford said: "We finished ahead of them last year and we came here to do what we have been doing. They were putting us under some pressure and on other occasions we may not have come through the way we did.

"We had a chance to go 3-1 up at the end and it was a good

match and we picked our time to go forward. We can build from this, definitely.”

The club’s Aberdeen-born captain Alex Lihou said: “Quite a few boys have come in, about six or seven, and we have a new teenage goalkeeper in Archie McLean who is still at school but our other goalkeeper, Sean Mahoney, was really good and kept out three corners and made a few other saves.”

Watsonians held a lengthy debrief by the side of the pitch with Player/coach Coultas leading and other players joining in and Tom Swarbrick, one of their most experienced players, conceded the the result was frustrating. He added: We had possession in the last quarter, but could not make it count.

“They (Clydesdale) have some experienced players and a good goalkeeper but this is early in the season and we are trying to build some momentum week-on-week.”

Later, The University of Edinburgh outran and overpowered Grove Menzieshill who could not keep pace with the quicksilver students who were invariably first to a loose ball and applied pressure incessantly through darting raids, swarming all over any opposition player who had the ball.

Scottish international Hamish Imrie was heavily involved and, indeed, it was the former Hibs S Form signing who opened the scoring with just over five minutes left of the opening quarter after a breakdown following a penalty corner.

Razor-sharp Imrie tucked the ball home after a superb stop by Grove goalkeeper, Steven McIlravey, but the rebound fell to the students’ player/coach and he made no mistake.

Sam Hunt, Alex Wilson and Drew Lobb were the other scorers in a one-sided game and Grove had no answer even with experienced Scotland player, Gavin Byers, who has returned from playing in Germany, in defence. The students just kept on coming.

The scoreline could have been greater if German-born Luca Muller, Arthur Owens and Wilson had other converted chances, but their coaching team was pleased to get their season up and running with a comfortable win.

Elsewhere, Grange team manager Martin Shepherdson said his men need to be more clinical in front of goal despite a 4-2 win at Uddingston under new coach Tom Hyndman.

Goals from Dylan Bean from a penalty corner in 11 minutes and then Joe Waterston one minute later were followed-up by a third from Jamie Green five minutes later and a final string from Aidan McQuade after 23 minutes had Grange in control.

Uddingston continued to fight hard and replied through Joe Russell in 27 following up from a penalty corner saved on the line and then in the final minute Finn Halliday converted a penalty stroke.

Dundee Wanderers are off the mark in the league with a 4-1 win over Hillhead on Tayside and Kelburne suffered their second straight defeat when they were beaten 4-1 by Inverleith at Glasgow's National Hockey Centre.

Other scores were Western Wildcats 4, Erskine Stewart's Melville 2

PICTURE: Action from Peffermill as The University of Edinburgh attack the Grove Menzieshill rearguard. Picture **Nigel Duncan**