

Coolen understands Clan-Fife rivalry

Tom Coolen, Fife Flyers' new head coach, has only been in Scotland for a matter of weeks but he is already well aware of the rivalry between Glasgow Clan and his team.

The pair clash head-on in a mouth-watering Challenge cup double-header this weekend with the first game at Braehead on Saturday (19.00) and the return at The Fife Ice Arena on Sunday (17.15).

Both clubs suffered different fortunes coming into the game. Clan, sponsored by Aspray Glasgow West, won in Belfast and Fife lost at home to Romanian touring side, CSM Brasov.

Coolen said lessons were learned by his squad in the defeat which came after the touring side lost 7-3 at Dundee Stars on Saturday and the Canadian-born coach has been round the block a enough times and collected many T-shirts during his long career in the world's fastest team sport to know that Brasov could be a threat.

They were and Fife suffered a jolt in it came in a 5-3 defeat and Coolen said: "I told our players, looking at their line-up, they had a lot of guys that were experienced, older guys, players that have been around.

"Basically, I told them to be ready for this. Yes, we got a good start, but they scored a couple of goals. They were a good hockey club, there is no question about it."

The experienced playcaller said that you can learn from adversity and said: "I liked how we responded in the third (period). We battled back but I think, down deep, our guys felt it was going to be an easier game than it was.

"You are never as good as you think you are and losing a game allows you better to focus on the task ahead. We lost (against Brasov) and I can only think that will help us for our challenge next weekend against Glasgow."

Coolen, a former assistant coach for the Polish men's national team, added: "You learn a lesson (from defeat) that nothing comes easy. I have learned that over the years so, again, I think if we get anything out of the defeat it is that we can't ever take something easy."

The 69-year-old coach from Halifax, Canada, who was a former assistant coach to the Buffalo Sabres of the National Hockey League, said: "Rivalry, that's what we want and the crowd will come in here. We need everybody, our players, our fans fans, we need everyone and we need need to come out (of it) with a good ending.

"This is a work in progress. If you think you will win every game then you are wrong. It is how you respond that is the most important thing and the defeat (to Brasov) will help us in our preparation."

PICTURE: Fife v Brasov courtesy of the Elite League