

Flyers target Giant-killing

Fife Flyers new head coach Tom Coolen revealed that there is only one thing on his mind right now, the visit of Belfast Giants on Saturday (face-off 19.15) to Kirkcaldy in the Challenge Cup.

Last season's Grand Slam champions will, he said, provide a significant barometer as to where his new-look squad are and the experienced Canadian said there is a buoyant mood in Fife Flyers' dressing-room.

That's after their convincing 5-1 home victory over Scottish rivals Glasgow Clan in the Challenge Cup, bouncing back after a 4-0 defeat at Clan on Saturday.

Flyers board the bus early on Sunday for their opening Elite League match at Coventry Blaze (17.30), but Coolen is focused on Saturday first and foremost. He will concentrate on Coventry on the long trip south.

A post-match, talk-in before Sunday's home clash with Clan helped to iron out some deficiencies and it sparked a reaction. The healthy home crowd loved it.

Coolen admitted it was not easy going into Braehead to face a squad which has a bigger budget and a great crowd and he added: "It was a big challenge. If we had got a little luck around the net early we might have got out of there with a win, but it was 0-0 with five minutes left of the second and that's a close hockey game.

"We lost the game but we took a lot of good stuff out of there and the score did not, in my opinion, reflect the entire game.

"We took things from that game and we talked about that (pre-match) and we talked about the things we had to do to be better defensively. They included not giving up those two-on-ones and three-on-twos.

"We played better as a team defensively (at Kirkcaldy) and we used our legs. We turned pucks over and we turned pucks to the net and finally we found a way to put one behind them.

"Once we found a way of getting the monkey off our backs we ended up scoring five.

"We also stayed with our game plan which was to use our talent, use our speed and use our forecheck and we found a way to get pucks behind them.

"We scored on our power play and we hit the post and I thought the game was a very good performance by our team. It reflected what we have here and, if we can get the crowd here in Fife to behind our team, like they were on Sunday, we are going to be a tough team to play. This is a tough place to play."

Coleen said Flyers need good players, good management and good fans working together to succeed and added: "With the support we had (against Clan) it really, really helps us.

"I like our team, I like what I see and we need to battle. We can skate and it is a fun game to coach. I am enjoying myself immensely and to come away with a win here (on Sunday) is extremely satisfying for ourselves and the organisation.

"We did give up that short-handed goal, but the way we felt (on the night) it was not going to change the course of this game. The plan was to win."

A penalty shot helped and Coolen said the strike was a big goal for the club. He added: "It was the right call by the

referee and it was great to see Teemu Pulkkinen put that puck behind that goaltender. We then scored the three in the third and it was a good feeling.”

Giants come calling on Saturday after playing at Clan on Friday (19.30) and Coolen, who is coaching in Britain for the first time, said he has watched Belfast on tape and added: “They are a good team and this is a team that won the league last year so, obviously, it is a good team coming in.

“We have to concentrate on our game and we have strengths and weaknesses but we try to improve our weakness and continue to emphasise our strengths.”



Tom Coolen pictured in training with the squad at The Fife Ice Arena PHOTO Nigel Duncan