

Taylor up-beat despite defeat

Inverleith lost 7-3 at The University of Edinburgh but coach Paul Taylor was proud of his much-changed, young side which contained two 14-year-olds, one aged 15 and another 16.

This, he argued, augers well for the future not just for the senior men's side but also in the shorter term for his age-group squads who are already big players for silverware in youth hockey in Scotland.

The youngsters have stepped-up after the club, famed for its youth development, lost eight players from last season.

Taylor did wonder if his new-look developing side could compete among Scotland's elite, but claimed that the young team had already earned their spurs in the opening skirmishes of the Scottish Premiership.

His men were punished for their first-half errors but they made changes during the half-time break and drew the second session 2-2, a satisfying performance for Taylor who saw his squad concede five goals in the first session with only one in reply.

They continued to battle with youth international Charlie Jack heavily involved and Taylor said: "We lost a lot of players in the summer but we looked to our junior teams and recruited from there. The young players have certainly stepped-up and we have picked up points."

The drew 3-3 at home to Grove Menzieshill and beat Kelburne 4-1 on the road after being beaten 6-2 by Western Wildcats at home on the opening day of the campaign.

He added: "We lost to the students and we have also lost to Western Wildcats this season. Western were runners-up to Grange last season. They are two of the big three in this league and we have yet to come up against Grange.

"But the game against the University side, who are quality, was not one which we were looking to, it is games against sides lower down the table that we are targeting."

Stuart Neave, a club stalwart and the club's team manager, said the youngsters who have come in are working hard and have played really well. He claimed his men made too many errors in the the first half against the University side.

He added: "Yes, losing three goals in the first quarter was difficult. They had a lot of pressure, but we changed some things in the second-half and played really well, drawing the session 2-2. Credit to the players."

Stuart Hatton netted twice and Andrew Clark scored a single for Inverleith. In the other camp, The University of Edinburgh march on and they remain unbeaten in the Scottish league so far.

The goals scored by Inverleith were the first they have conceded in domestic hockey this term with 16 netted in their favour.

Captain Keir Robb scored a treble with Sam Hunt, John Bradley, Alex Wilson and Tom Fox completing the roll of honor on the day. Robb's men now go into a key game in the British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS) League at Edinburgh's Peffermill complex on Wednesday (push-back 3pm) on a high.

He assessed the game thus: "It was a good win and we earned

three points but we did not play at our best. We dominated the first half but got some momentum and we move on.”

Elsewhere, in the feature game of the day, champions Grange edged arch rivals Western Wildcats 2-1, netting their goals after penalty corner awards.

Dylan Bean broke the deadlock after 25 minutes, a direct shot from a penalty corner, and Jamie Green added the second. He netted on the hour, deflecting the ball home from another penalty corner.

Western’s goal came from a penalty stroke in the dying minutes, Fraser Moran deflecting the ball home, and Grange’s team manager, Martin Shepherdson, said: “We shaded the game and created more chances. We also defended strongly to deny Western.”

Clydesdale celebrated winning on the road at Watsonians last week but they skidded to a 4-3 defeat at Glasgow rivals Kelburne. Watsonians suffered their third straight defeat, this time going down 4-3 at home to Hillhead.

Captain Tom Swarbrick said it was frustrating but added: “We started too slowly and had to chase the game to get back to 3-3.”

And player/coach Dan Coultas added: “We didn’t get any pressure on Hillhead and let them dictate play and pass through us. Before we knew it, we were 3-1 down.

“In the third quarter we started playing like we did against Grange last week (they lost 3-2) and piled on the pressure to get back to 3-3 but it should have been more.

“We didn’t convert anywhere near enough penalty corners or make the most of our ball in the circle. We had all the possession and control in the second-half but didn’t convert our chances then got caught on the break in the last quarter

to end up losing the game.”

Coultas, a former Great Britain squad player, said: “This was very disappointing for us after we pushed Grange close last week and we need to be able to put in good performances each week. We have been inconsistent so far and we need to sour ourselves out and play well next week (against Dundee Wanderers away) because every game is huge for us now after a very poor start.”

PICTURE: Action from Inverleith at The University of Edinburgh
by ***Nigel Duncan***