

Euro Hockey League for Western this weekend

Scotland's hopes in the EuroHockey League (EHL) in Barcelona this weekend are with Western Wildcats and they face T J Pizen Litice in their opening match on Saturday (13.15). Coach Steven Percy believes it is a "dream draw".

Percy acknowledged that it will be a difficult game but also very winnable and added: "So, it is a great opportunity to get a first win at the European Hockey League."

The second game, he said, will be much tougher and added: "It'll be a glamour tie against Kampong or Bleomendaal, two top Dutch teams who contain world class players and icons of our sport.

"Success at the EHL would be at least one victory and a competitive nature to our performances."

Western go into Europe's elite club tournament after a disappointing home defeat to Scottish champions, Grange, last weekend, scoring their consolation goal late in the game from Fraser Moran from a penalty stroke.

The Auchenhowie-based combine travel minus two players, AJ Lochrin who broke his collar bone in pre-season, and Hamish Galt who is taking a break from hockey but is due to return to action in November.

They have also lost striker Andrew McConnell to German club Harvestehuder but everyone else is available including new recruits Iain McFadden, Craig Wallace and Fabian Goldie.

T J Pizen Litice are the 82nd club to compete in the league and only the second from the Czech Republic but they come into the competition as double winners in their native country.

The club, coached by Tomas Levy, a job he has held for five years, won the national indoor and outdoor titles and they are in-form having won their four league games so far this season, claiming 26 goals in the process.

And they have left nothing to chance as they hosted a pre-season camp in Germany to held in their build-up to the EuroHockey League.

Reinhard Nicklas knows something about Scottish hockey having played North of the Border as well as in Italy and Belgium.

Adam Uhlir skippers the side and he doubles as captain of the Czech Republic side and he has twice been named best outdoor player in the Czech Republic.

Jakub Korytak has previously played in England and Italy and has European tournament experience and has also played in the world indoor.

Lukas Bendra captained the country's under-21 side and they have recently recruited Slovakian international Adrian Augustinic.

PICTURE: Action from Erskine Stewart's Melville v Western Wildcats last season. By **Nigel Duncan**