

Flyers hit by magnificent seven

Fife Flyers staged a late rally but Belfast Giants consolidated their position at the top of the Challenge Cup qualifying group with a 7-4 victory in Northern Ireland.

The Northern Irish side, who are the cup holders, move on to ten points from their five games and blew the Kirkcaldy club away in the first session with four unanswered goals, but Fife fought back in the second to share it 1-1.

Giants, sponsored by Stena Line, extended their lead to 6-1 with less than ten minutes of the game left but Fife, who have six points from six games and are second in the four-strong group, staged a late rally.

The sides meet again on Saturday (19.15) at The Fife Ice Arena, this time in the Elite League, and Flyers' new head coach, Tom Coolen (pictured earlier this season on the bench), will hope to use home advantage.

Earlier, Fife could not have had a worse start and were 2-0 down after 3min 45sec after opening their account on a power play through Ara Nazarian assisted by Mark Cooper and Charlie Curti after 2min 48sec.

The second followed less than a minute later when Matthew McLeod netted after being set-up by Jacob Friend.

That lead was extended to 3-0 in the seventh minute when Sean Norris was sent through by Travis Brown who had been fed by David Phillips.

And it got worse as Giants scored their fourth in 9min 43sec when Daniel Tedesco was set-up by Cooper and Jeff Baum.

It took until the 29th minute for Fife to put their name on

the scoresheet with Teemu Pulkkinen scoring after assists by Collin Shirley and Max Humitz.

But six minute later Giants were 5-1 ahead when Ben Lake scored with John Curran and Miles Gendron involved in the move.

Then it was 6-1 when Cooper scored unassisted after 50min 39sec but the Scots hit back seconds later when Shirley scored after being set-up by Stephen Desrocher and Pulkkinen in the 51st minute.

James Spence cut the deficit further with a power play goal with Adam Holwell involved in the move and Lucas Chiodo scored unassisted on another power play opportunity after 53min 51sec for 6-4.

Coach Coolen called a time out with less than three minutes left but it was Giants who had the final say with a seventh goal with six seconds left on an empty net after Flyers gambled by withdrawing their netminer, Kohei Sato netting with Cooper and Lake involved.