

Bean at the double to sink students

Dylan Bean netted twice and teenage prospect Archie Stephen scored a single as impressive Scottish Premiership pace-setters, Grange, produced a thoroughly professional performance to counter hard-running, The University of Edinburgh, and earn a comfortable cushion moving into the second-half of the season which starts in mid-February.

The league leaders started on the front foot, forcing the eager students back, and led 2-0 at the half-time break, but a third coming in the opening minute of the second-half gave Hamish Imrie's hard-working students a mountain to climb.

They certainly tried, hemming Grange in for spells during the third and fourth quarters, and industrious Lucas Muller, a German-born player with much to offer, pulled one back, but it was not enough.

Grange kept possession and the frustrated students made errors and turned the ball over as they tried to force the game and, when they did break through, they found Grange's Scotland international goalkeeper, David Forrester, in top form.

Indeed, he made several telling stops, the best following a penalty corner when Sam Hunt let fly from the top left of the D. Forrester's left hand was lifted in the nick of time and the ball was cleared.

Grange's captain, Alan Johnson, was a thoroughly satisfied man at the final whistle and he is delighted with the development of the side who introduced several newcomers, some in their teens, at the start of their title defence.

The champions, under coach Steve Grubb, have certainly come onto a game, showing clinical efficiency as the season progressed, and Johnson, a hockey coach at Fettes College, stressed that complacency will not be allowed to set in when the league season outdoors resumes next year.

This game was played on a sparkling Autumn day, with no wind and a clear blue sky, and the players warmed their fans – the thermometer hovered around 7C but out of the sun it was really chilly – with some fine early moves.

The champions were rewarded mid-way through the opening session when bustling Bean converted from a penalty corner in their first real attack. The students huffed and puffed and their frustration was evident when a breakaway resulted in a ball which fizzed across the opposition D. There were no takers.

Grange continued to dominate possession and were rewarded from open play with Bean being in the right place at the right time to convert from close in, but they did not have it all their own way.

Suddenly, Forrester, who had been a virtual spectator, was confronted with a breakaway and advanced quickly from the goal line to thwart an attack following a defensive mistake and Grange had to reshuffle when on-field co-ordinator Cale Walsh, one of the club's assistant coaches, dived to divert a ball near the Pavilion touchline and tweaked his hamstring. He took

no further part.

Their goal one minute into the third quarter by Stephens, lurking at the far post, was a real kick in the teeth for the students. However, they showed much more aggression, battled hard and did threaten.

They were rewarded when Muller, who has a tremendous engine, scored, but Grange are streetwise and took the sting out of the home side's play, passing the ball around and giving little away.

Yes, Muller had a sniff late on, latching onto a long ball delivered from midfield on the left side of the D, but his effort flew wide and, with it, went the students chances of salvaging something from the game.

Imrie withdrew his goalkeeper with less than three minutes remaining to have 11 outfield players, but that play failed to produce and Grange celebrated at the final whistle but are not getting carried away.

Skipper Johnson, naturally, had a smile on his face, but the 25-year-old has been around the block long enough to know that there is a lot of hockey to be played before anybody gets their hands on the silverware.

Elsewhere, Erskine Stewart's Melville earned a welcome 3-1 win over Dundee Wanderers while Western Wildcats mauled Glasgow rivals, Kelburne, 7-0. Inverleith coach Paul Taylor stressed the importance of their home fixture against Uddingston as they battle to remain in the top six, and they earned a narrow 3-2 victory at Loretto School. A set-back for the ambitious Lanarkshire side but celebration time for Inverleith who had goals from Felix Schneider, Charlie Jack, who has been in fine form recently for the club, and Andrew Clark.

In the women's Premiership, The University of Edinburgh were unable to complete their game at Clydesdale Western because of

a frozen pitch. Scottish international Jess Ross had earned them 2-0 ahead with a double before it became too dangerous to continue. GHK did finish and they beat Uddingston 5-0.

Watsonians beat Grange Edinburgh Ladies at Fettes 3-3 with goals from Sarah Jamieson in quarter two, a penalty corner from Emily Dark at the start of quarter four and a third from Anni Arthur two minutes later.

Coach Keith Smith said his players were really good without the ball, pressing with real intensity, and this made it difficult for Grange to build and limited them to a couple of chances.

However, with the ball he said his players were too eager at times. He added: "We could have been more patient and created more clear cut opportunities. Having said that, as the game wore on, and it was still just 1-0, we managed to show that patience and the goals came as a result." Elsewhere, Hillhead drew 4-4 with Gordonians.

PICTURE: Dylan Bean (white shirt) in the heart of the action at Peffermill by ***Nigel Duncan***



Goalkeeper David Forrester goes down to halt an attack by The

University of Edinburgh. Picture by *Nigel Duncan*



Dylan Bean threatens at Peffermill. Picture by *Nigel Duncan*



Grange break up an attack by the eager students. Picture *Nigel Duncan*



Grange on the attack at Peffermill. Picture by ***Nigel Duncan***



Dylan Bean (left) and team manager Martin Shepherdson (right) join in the celebrations at the final whistle. Picture ***Nigel Duncan***