

Campbell save decisive as Watsonians move into semis

Watsonians squeezed into the semi-finals of the Scottish Cup, but it took nerve-shredding penalty strokes contest to decide their quarter-final tie with plucky Grove Menzieshill at chilly Peffermill.

The Edinburgh combine led 2-0 at the break and looked comfortable, but the Taysiders refused to throw in the towel and the battling Grove Menzieshill squad levelled late in the game.

A close game had been predicted given that the Premiership clash ended 1-1, but Watsonians have found form recently and they dominated the opening half at Peffermill.

They sit fourth in the 12-strong table with 17 points from 11 games and the Edinburgh club have scored 23 goals and let in 22 while the Dundee combine are second bottom with six from ten starts, scoring only 16 goals and letting in 28, and it looked that way early on as Watsonians pressed forward.

So, it was no surprise when Jack Cahalin broke the deadlock with a slick strike, the best goal of the game, Dan Coultas, Watsonians' player/coach, fired the ball down the left-hand side of the pitch with real venom, it was deflected forward first-time by Duncan Riddell who used the pace of the ball. Cahalin did the rest, firing low first-time into the backboard. Quick and decisive.

The same player made it 2-0 from close-in just before the break and Watsonians looked in command, but appearances can be deceptive.

Grove bounced back and Mike Forbes had a shot saved, a warning to the home side. Then Jamie Spratt broke through from close in, a reward for a bout of pressure, to make it 2-1.

Scottish international Duncan Riddell had a chance minutes later but too many of Watsonians moves broke down near the D and Alfie Bonnar made them pay when he netted in the final quarter.

Finlay Duncan picked up the ball on the left wing and sent an aerial into the D towards unmarked Bonner at the far post and he fired home low, first-time into the backboard.

Tension mounted and a large crowd gathered to watch the action. As the final whistle loomed, former Scotland player Luke Cranney had a sniff as the clock ticked down but he fired well over with a wild shot, much to the relief of the home fans in the stand.

On to penalty strokes and the key moment came when Watsons' experienced goalkeeper Luke Campbell dived but left his legs behind. They did the trick, the ball bouncing off them to deny the Tayside team. The home side moved into the final four on a 5-3 scoreline after Cahalin converted.

Campbell said the Edinburgh side had enjoyed a strong first-half but once the game had become 2-2 then the result could have gone either way, he was pleased that his save made a difference.

And Watsonians' player/coach Dan Cloultas added: "It was a frustrating second-half as we couldn't add to the scoreline at 2-0 and then a couple of defensive errors brought them back into the game. At least we sealed it on penalties."

Gavin Byres, Byers, Grove's player/coach, praised his men for lifting their game in the second period and said: "We were much better in the second half."

Elsewhere, holders Western Wildcats progressed with a 2-0 win at Upper Windyedge over Hillhead and they go into the hat along with Grange who blitzed city rivals Inverleith 8-0 on Friday at Fettes.

PICTURE: Goal No 2 for Watsonians as Jack Cahalin celebrates.
Picture ***Nigel Duncan***



