

Another big test for Coolen against wounded Panthers

Fife Flyers' head coach Tom Coolen and his squad face another big game on Thursday (19.30) when bottom club Nottingham Panthers visit The Fife Ice Arena in the Elite League.

The Midlands combine have 41 points from 49 games and prop up the ten-strong table with Fife currently sixth on 47 points from 49 starts.

Coolen's men have scored 152 goals and let in 189 while Panthers have netted on 151 occasions and shipped 187.

Seven of those came last Sunday when a short-benched Nottingham team lost to second-placed Cardiff Devils after penalty shots.

Panthers were minus Mike Caruso, Carl Neill, Logan Neilson and Jake Ryczek and lost defenceman Myles McGurty in the first period. It is not known if any of the injured players will return at Kirkcaldy.

On the positive side, 27-year-old, Finnish winger, Otto Nieminen, who joined the club after a spell in Denmark with Odense Bulldogs, netted his second treble in four matches and could prove a real danger man.

So far this term, Panthers beat Fife 4-2 in the Midlands in late October and 4-3 at Kirkcaldy in early January before Flyers responded with a 9-7 victory on February 10 in the Kingdom.

Panthers, however, hit back with a 3-2 overtime success in mid-February in England before Fife earned a 3-1 road victory on March 12.

This is the last time the pair are scheduled to meet in the regular season and Panthers coach Jonathan Paredes would love to return home with two points.

After this, they host Guildford Flames on March 30, Sheffield Steelers, the league winners for the first time in eight years and also the Challenge Cup holders, on April 3, travel to Dundee on April 6 and end the season with a home joust against Stars on April 7.

PICTURE: Tom Coolen on the bench courtesy of the Elite League