

Bean double puts Grange in pole position

The destiny of the men's hockey Premiership is back in Grange's hands after a devastating display in a 4-0 victory over title rivals Western Wildcats at Fettes.

A double from Dylan Bean and singles from Aidan McQuade and Jamie Green saw the defending champions bounce back strongly from a recent 3-1 home defeat to The University of Edinburgh.

That could have ended their title challenge and the Edinburgh combine went into the clash minus Scottish international Gordon Amore and Alan Johnston, but the home side started strongly, forcing the Auchenhowie men back.

Fired-up Grange dominated the first-half and were rewarded with two goals inside the first 20 minutes from bustling Bean, but the Glasgow side, who were missing injured players Callum Duke and evergreen Jonny Christie, rallied in the early part of the second period, forcing Grange back, with Rob Harwood orchestrating from midfield.

But they failed to break through despite being awarded a penalty stroke in the third quarter after assistant coach Cale Walsh was adjudged to have fouled a rival in the home D. Fraser Moran stepped up and fired the ball towards goal but it struck the right-hand upright. Moran put his head in his hands.

That nano-second proved decisive and Grange gained a lift. They capitalised as McQuade converted from a penalty corner, lashing the ball into the net, and raising his arms in triumph.

And then Green, who had been green carded, came out of the penalty box to round two defenders and slip the ball home past a despairing dive from Western goalkeeper Gavin Somerville.

The home side kept a clean sheet despite Austrian player Clemens Rusnjak being handed a yellow card and a minimum of a five minute penalty late on and the substitution of hard working Robbie Croll who was twice hit in the head by the ball in the dying minutes.

Martin Shepherdson, Grange's team manager, was pleased with the result and the performance and he said: "We dominated the first-half. They came back at us in Q3 but we scored our third and fourth at the right time."

Elsewhere, The University of Edinburgh thrashed Watsonians 5-0 and Uddingston drew 2-2 with Hillhead.

Grange go into European competition next weekend and the big rivals meet again in the semi-final of the Scottish Cup before the league resumes with the Edinburgh side facing Watsonians and Uddingston in their final two games.

Shepherdson said: "If we win those two games then we retain the title. It is on our hands again."

Meanwhile, Scotland's Aspiring girls beat Canada under-18's 2-0 at the same venue, Sarah Hill firing a shot from the top of the circle into the net in the first-half and Lexie Macmillan slotted in the final quarter for a comfortable win which could have been more had the home side taken a number of chances they created.

The sides meet again at The University of Edinburgh Playing

Fields at Peffermill on Sunday (push-off 3pm) and admission is free.

PICTURE: Action from Western v Grange at Fettes by ***Nigel Duncan***