

Flyers put to sword by Men of Steel

Fife Flyers face a five-goal deficit when they face-off against treble-chasing Sheffield Steelers in the second-leg of their Elite League play-off quarter-final at Kirkcaldy on Sunday (17.15).

That's after the Yorkshire side, known as the Men of Steel, continued their dominance of Flyers this season with a 9-4 victory in the first-leg at Ice Sheffield.

The newly-crowned league champions, who also hold the Challenge Cup, enjoy a healthy cushion thanks to a surge in the middle and final sessions and Flyers' coach Tom Coolen (pictured by Scott Wiggins courtesy of the Elite League) faces a massive task to lift his men for the return in The Fife Ice Arena.

The sides were level at 1-1 after the first 20 minutes but the slide started early in the second session.

Steelers pulled clear with a 4-1 second period and closed the match out with a 4-2 scoreline in the third and coach Tom Coolen will have to work really hard to lift his men for the return.

Steelers' coach Aaron Fox can travel north with his squad looking odds-on favourites to make the final four and the play-off finals weekend at Nottingham on April 20 and 21.

Earlier, match started badly for Flyers when Mitchell Balmas fired the hosts ahead after ten minutes but Fife countered with a strike from Troy Lajeunesse after a move involving skipper Jonas Emmerdahl and Kyle Osterberg.

But Steelers hit back with two goals inside two minutes, Cole Shudra netting after 22 minutes and Balmas after 24.

Flyers refused to buckle and Max Humitz responded with Fife's second after good work from Teemu Pulkkinen with 29 minutes on the clock but two goals inside two minutes hit Fife hard.

Sudra was on the mark for his second and Sheffield's fourth after 31 minutes and Walsall-born defenceman Sam Jones, who played 24 games for Fife in season 2019/20, scoring four goals, slotted the fifth with Shudra supplying the ammunition. Time 34 minutes.

The 4-1 second period surge by Sheffield stung Fife who were outshot 23-15 overall after an even first session in which Steelers fired 12 shots on Shane Owen and Flyers replied with ten on Matthew Greenfield.

Flyers were also caught cold in the third when Brandon Whistle netted No 6 only 1min 42sec into the session and Mikko Juusola added No 7 after 42min 55sec.

Humitz pulled one back for 7-3 after 48 minutes but Marc-Olivier Vallerand claimed Sheffield's eighth goal just over two minutes later before Collin Shirley netted for Fife unassisted with less than three minutes left.

Brett Newman, however, scored unassisted only 27 seconds later to make the final scoreline 9-4.