

Watsonians women stay on course for domestic treble

There was joy for Watsonians women who continue to chase down a glory treble but heartbreak for Grange men in the hockey Grand Finals in Glasgow.

First the winners and coach Keith Smith's squad, who recently claimed the Premiership, emerged with a 4-0 scoreline against Clydesdale Western, but all the goals came late in the game.

Earlier, the Edinburgh side started on the front foot and pinned their rivals back but found the opposition rearguard difficult to break down.

The first quarter was blanked and so was the second and Clydesdale eventually asked some questions.

The the score remained deadlocked until the break and Watsonians maintained their high press into the second-half but Clydesdale survived to the end of the quarter without conceding.

Things changed dramatically in the final session when the Glasgow side eventually cracked, Katie Stott slotting into the bottom left corner.

A second soon followed. It was set up by Sarah Jamieson who fed Genevive Hussle at the far post for a tap in.

Clydesdale Western almost pulled one back from a penalty corner rebound when Scotland international Bronwyn Shields shot but she was denied by the Edinburgh side's goalkeeper,

Lucy Camlin.

The desperate West of Scotland outfit gambled by withdrawing their goalkeeper to give themselves an extra outfield player but the move failed and they conceded two goals.

Milly Berndes-Cade claimed the third, firing the ball into the empty net before Jamieson counted to complete the scoring.

Grange now and Western Wildcats will represent Scotland in the European Hockey League next season after beating the newly-crowned men's Premiership champions 1-0, a team who defeated the West of Scotland club 4-0 at Fettes recently in the regular season run-in.

On this occasion, Grange found themselves up against a determined side with an experienced goalkeeper, Gavin Sommerville, in fine form. He pulled off a string of quality stops to keep a clean sheet.

It was Wildcats forward Fraser Moran who netted the game-winner in the second quarter. Scottish international Callum Duke sent a delightful diagonal ball to skipper Rob Harwood who fed Moran. He turned to fire into the bottom left corner.

Grange earned a three penalty corners as they upped the pressure, but evergreen Sommerville stood firm to keep the scoreline 1-0 going into the break.

The Edinburgh combine continued to probe and Sommerville continued to defy them. A quality stop from a one-on-one with David Nairn was arguably the pick of the bunch.

Sommerville and his team-mates kept their cool in the final session despite Dylan Bean coming close for Grange and Wildcats held out for the welcome win.

Disappointed Martin Shepherdson, Grange's team manager, sportingly said: "Great credit to Western who defended well and especially to their keeper who had an excellent game."

He added: "I felt we had the better of the game and definitely created the better chances. We know we should have done better with the chances we created, but I was proud of the effort and the application with our side slightly depleted due to injury and unavailability."

The Edinburgh side still have the Scottish Cup final to come next weekend and victory would secure a notable domestic double.

There was joy, however, for Erskine Stewart's Melville (ESM) who will play in the Premiership next season after a 4-1 victory over Gordonians in the relegation/promotion clash, and the Edinburgh club had to come from behind to survive in the top division.

Gordonians bagged an early lead when George Jones swept home after an attack down the right but the Capital club responded and Edward May slammed into the bottom right corner to level from a penalty corner.

ESM found Gordonians defence to be strong, but they eventually broke through from a penalty corner routine, captain Jack Collister slotting at the right post.

The third arrived via a penalty stroke from Rich Wright, this time into the top left corner, for 3-1 and Collister had the final say when he counted with a slick finish into the bottom left to secure their win.

Hillhead Ladies retained their Premiership status with a 3-2 win over Dundee Wanderers and a 4-3 victory for Greenock Morton over Uddingston 2s saw them retain their Men's Regional League status for next season.

In the women's Championship League, Highland recorded a 4-0 play-off victory over Falkirk and Linlithgow to secure promotion.

PICTURE: Watsonians on parade taken by ***Nigel Duncan***