

Curran accelerates potential recovery for Flyers

Fife Flyers' interim head coach, Johnny Curran, has enjoyed a great week of training and his men have been getting back to playing at a faster speed.

What's more, the Kirkcaldy outfit will play with a full compliment of imports this weekend for the first time since early December.

Fife have a home joust with Dundee Stars on Saturday (19.15) and then make the trip to Sheffield Steelers on Sunday (16.00).

Of course, the Canadian seeks points to help lift the club off the bottom of the ten-strong table, but to do that he has to change their mindset, from a squad which has developed the habit of losing to one which believes that they can win games in the Elite League.

It's a difficult thing to do as opposition teams scrap for points to boost their own play-off hopes, but Curran is confident his men has the skills and the desire to win games of ice hockey in the highly-competitive environment of the league.

Self-belief is required from everybody who laces on a pair of skates to represent Britain's oldest professional ice hockey club.

That's difficult to resurrect after an 11-game winless run

which, ironically, followed one of the club's best results of the season so far, a 5-3 home victory over big budget Sheffield on December 1.

And Curran will take encouragement from the last meeting between the clubs at Kirkcaldy. Stars have had mixed results after their 3-2 win at The Fife Ice Arena on Boxing Day, Philippe Sanche netted the game-winner after 53min 35sec.

The Dundee side then thrashed Flyers 7-2 on December 28 at The Dundee Ice Arena but then lost 5-2 at Belfast Giants and 4-3 after overtime at home to Giants, before shocking long-standing, pace-setters, Cardiff Devils 4-2 in the Principality, a significant result.

However, they followed up with a 4-3 home defeat to Manchester Storm, another team in the basement zone.

The Tayside team have, however, won their last five games against Fife according to the club's historian, and Sanche is undoubtedly a danger man with goals in each of his last three games against Flyers

Last weekend, the Flyers skidded to a 3-1 home defeat to Coventry Blaze and were burned 7-1 at Guildford Flames. A paltry six points from 26 games tells its own sad story and 54 goals scored is not enough.

The Kirkcaldy club have also conceded 134 goals with Stars the next worst on 118. The Dundee club have scored 90 goals and they occupy the eighth and final play-off spot with 22 points from 29 games.

Sheffield have now climbed to third place in the division with 34 points from 26 fixtures and they have notched 101 goals, that's the best in the league ahead of the weekend skirmishes. Cardiff have accumulated 100 from 28 games and are six points ahead of Steelers with two more games placed.

Belfast Giants, incidentally, are second on 37 points from 26 fixtures and Steelers are in no mood to let pressure slip on the Northern Irish combine or Devils as the league enters the business end of the campaign.

PICTURE: Flyers in action by ***Jillian McFarlane***