

DEFENDING league champions Leeds Knights remain the only NIHL National team to boast a 100 per cent record after four games, thanks to posting their second straight maximum return of the 2023-24 campaign.

After erasing a 3-0 first period deficit in emphatic style at home to Peterborough Phantoms on Saturday night to win 8-4, Leeds then hit the road to end the three-game winning start of Bees IHC, coming from behind once again, this time to emerge 3-2 winners.

Oli Endicott capped a fine weekend when he opened the scoring in Slough early on, his effort cancelled out by Josh Smith at 8.46 before player-coach Dominik Gabaj gave the hosts the lead at 26.19.

However, Knights' captain Kieran Brown levelled just under two minutes later before a Matt Barron power play strike at 39.00 proved to be a game-winning effort.

On Saturday, it looked early on as if the Knights would be surrendering their winning start to the league campaign, deservedly trailing to Phantom's goals from Lukas Sladkovsky and Martins Susters (2).

Crucially, the Knights got back in the game early on in the second, when Barron fired home on the rebound at 21.47 after Jordan Marr spilled Brown's initial shot.

The Knights captain then fired through traffic – aided by a good screen from Josh Adkins - to make it a one-goal game at 28.42, the comeback completed when Barron doubled his tally from the bottom of the right circle at 38.36 after good set-up work behind the net from Brown.

Just over a minute later, though, the Knights then switched off, allowing Jarvis Hunt to roam free and score unchecked from close range, although the Phantoms' joy was even more short-lived than the Knights a few moments earlier, a drive down centre ice from Mac Howlett seeing the puck eventually bobble free to Matt Haywood to rifle home from close range to make it 4-4 with just three seconds of the period remaining.

After such a breath-taking conclusion to the second, the Knights then took control early in the third, Adkins showing quick-thinking to pounce on a loose puck close in to give the Knights the lead for the first time on the night at 43.02.

Only 25 more seconds had elapsed when Adkins turned provider for Brown's second of the game, but it wasn't until late on that the points were made safe, Oli Endicott capping a typically-bustling, energetic performance with a fine finish from the left circle to make it 7-4, Howlett also getting on the board with an empty-netter to complete another fine night's work.

For Knights news, reports, features and interviews log on to: <https://www.yorkshireeveningpost.co.uk/sport/other-sport>