

Leeds Knights 3-1 Hull Seahawks: Revenge over Yorkshire rivals (Thursday 22nd February 2024)

The Morley Glass Leeds Knights hosted Hull Seahawks on Thursday evening at The Castle in the National Ice Hockey League, looking to get revenge from their National Cup semi-final meetings. It was the captain #12 Kieran Brown with the game-winning goal as the Knights secured a further two points at the top of the table.

Last time round

The last time the two sides met was in the National Cup semi-final with the Seahawks registering impressive wins in both legs to progress to the final where they are set to face MK Lightning. However, the last time they met in the league was a different story: the Yorkshire derby double-header in December saw Hull victorious at The Castle, but the following day at the Hull Ice Arena, Leeds Knights proved their position at the top of the table with five goals scored and a shutout for #31 Sam Gospel.

First period (1-1)

The Knights were without #3 Bailey Perre, #19 Innes Gallacher, #26 Tommy Spraggon, #34 Gregor Mills, and #35 Luca Tessadri for the derby day fixture with #2 James Archer a late scratch after warm-ups too seeing the home side ice with a squad of 15+2. The visitors also travelled with a short bench of 14+2, the most notable absence being no #21 Bobby Chamberlain who was ruled out through injury.



#31 Sam Gospel led the Knights out with a starting six of #Noah McMullin, #14 Lewis Baldwin, #12 Kieran Brown, #33 Finn Bradon and #37 Matt Barron as #64 Angus Laing took his position in between the pipes for the Seahawks.

The opening ten-minutes were end-to-end as could be expected from this fixture, but Leeds were creating chances to open the scoring early. #12 Kieran Brown found himself on the breakaway at 2:40 before #91 Jake Witkowski was forcing Laing to make a block with a shot from the right and #33 Finn Bradon was forcing the Hull goalie to make a messy glove save with a powerful shot from the top of the circle at 5:49.

#90 Declan Jones broke into the offensive zone calling #31 Sam Gospel into action at 8:20 as he broke one-on-one with the Leeds netminder making the block and collecting the puck to deny the visitors.

At 8:33, #14 Lewis Baldwin received the first penalty of the game sitting two-minutes for tripping and sending Hull on the powerplay. Despite applying consistent pressure and testing the Knights' defence, they couldn't find the back of the net, even with their player advantage. #95 Mac Howlett and #11 Matt Haywood tried to break shorthanded, but they couldn't work the puck past Laing, returning to full strength with the score still level.

The Seahawks opened the scoring at 12:52 through #11 Finlay Ulrick slipping the puck past Gospel assisted by #96 Owen Sobchak and #24 Brock Bartholomew. The visitors went close to doubling their advantage at 14:43, but the Leeds netminder made an important glove save to stop the attack.



Searching for an equaliser before the break, #11 Matt Haywood brought the score level with a shot from the left fired past Laing at the near post and into the roof of the net, assisted by #9 Jordan Buesa and #91 Jake Witkowski.

#24 Brock Bartholomew almost gave Hull a one-goal lead at the end of the period, but he was denied by the crossbar at 18:56 and Leeds managed to hold on until the buzzer with the score 1-1 at the first intermission.

Second period (1-1)

The second period was very much the same as the first with both teams battling equally for possession of the puck and challenging the netminders in the process.

#64 Angus Laing was caught out of position at 21:28, but Leeds couldn't capitalise upon the vacated net, taking too long to take the shot and giving the netminder enough time to get back and protect his goal - when the Knights did eventually get their shot off, the puck was caught under Laing and the chance was gone.

Coinciding penalties were given to #9 Jordan Buesa for Leeds and #91 Nathan Salem for Hull, both for roughing at 21:31, with #5 Rhys Edwards receiving two-minutes for roughing also, sending the Knights on the powerplay. #12 Kieran Brown played the puck in from the left of the slot to #91 Jake Witkowski, but his shot was blocked by the sea of Hull shirts crowding the crease with the puck falling back into the captain's possession - his follow-up shot was deflected high over the net. #91 Jake Witkowski tried his luck again at 22:17, his effort going high.

Having retrieved the puck in the defensive zone, #12 Kieran Brown worked it down the ice and around the Seahawks' net before trying to slot it in at the backdoor, but Laing read the play well and made the pad block at 23:10 with the danger cleared further by a Hull skater.

The visitors returned to five skaters unscathed, but the Knights' offensive pressure didn't falter as Brown produced another chance that could have given the hosts the lead, his attempt caught by Laing and collected before the onrushing #95 Mac Howlett could reach it as 23:57.

It was then the visitors' chance to break forwards with Gospel producing a series of saves to deny them and keep the score level.

At 27:59, a scuffle resulted in #6 Ethan Hehir receiving two-minutes for roughing and #71 Emil Svec sitting two-minutes for roughing alongside #96 Owen Sobchak sitting two for hooking. It was a five-on-four powerplay for the Knights, but there were no real Grade-A chances created despite the player advantage.



Fans inside The Castle thought the captain had found a way through the Seahawks' stoic defence at 30:05. It was the closest chance of the period as Brown's shot from the right beyond Laing bounced off the post and deflected back into the slot behind the netminder, but the decision was no-goal as puck didn't cross the line - the score remained level.

This kick-started a period of chances for the Knights with #33 Finn Bradon's effort saved before #81 Louis Colvin's shot went just wide at 32:20 and #91 Jake Witkowski forced Laing to make a glove save at 32:52 after Leeds won the face-off in the offensive zone.

The forward continued to press with a shot from the right saved by the glove of Laing once more at 37:07 with the save spilled but cleared by a Hull defenceman before a Knights skater could reach it.

Neither side could find a way to take the lead as the clock ran down the final few minutes meaning it was tied going into the third period. It was certainly a period in which the hosts had the closer of the chances with 12 shots on Laing and only five made on Gospel.

Third period (3-1)

The first big chance of the third period was #95 Mac Howlett's as he burst through centre ice and produced a shot. His shot didn't reach the back of the net, but the forward was close to poking home the rebound with Laing recovering and making the block at 42:22.

It was another powerplay in the Knights' favour at 46:45 as #90 Declan Jones received a two-minute minor for slashing, and the captain made good use of the opportunity with a blast from the right straight past Laing with the powerplay goal giving the hosts the lead. The goal was assisted by #91 Jake Witkowski at 47:41.



The Seahawks' young line worked hard in the third period to test Gospel and work the Knights' defence as they searched for an equaliser, but they lacked the finishing product in front of goal. They were sent on the powerplay at 52:55 as #95 Mac Howlett sat two-minutes for slashing, but the player advantage still couldn't help them find the back of the net as Leeds worked hard to hold onto their lead.

#31 Sam Gospel made an important save at 52:25 to deny the visitors again - the save rebounded, but the goalie had it covered and collected the puck.

With three minutes left to play, the Seahawks were throwing everything at Leeds and the home side did well to handle the pressure. Gospel continued to make the important saves to prevent a late equaliser that could have taken the game to overtime.

Pulling #64 Angus Laing in favour of an extra skater, the visitors left their net empty and #9 Jordan Buesa took full advantage with a swipe of the puck sending it over the line at 59:18, assisted by #11 Matt Haywood and #44 Jordan Griffin, bringing the game to a close with the league leaders retrieving another two points.

The Knights got their revenge over their Yorkshire rivals after a battling performance on home ice with #12 Kieran Brown doing what he does best and scoring the game-winning goal. Leeds are away on Saturday as they take on Bristol Pitbulls before returning to The Castle on Sunday as we host the Romford Raiders.

Match report written by Emily Laycock

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