

LEEDS KNIGHTS made the most of their one-game weekend by producing what head coach Ryan Aldridge labelled their most “complete” performance of the 2024-25 campaign so far.

The 7-0 victory over Yorkshire derby rivals Sheffield Steeldogs was built on the perfect combination of the solid foundation laid out by netminder Sam Gospel’s man-of-the-match performance and some clinical finishing at the other end.

It proved to be a night for numbers, too, Gospel recording his first shutout of the season, Matt Bissonnette recording a four-point night, while veteran centre Matt Haywood blasted through the 250-point for the organisation as he picked up two goals and an assist.

Given the Steeldogs produced as many goalscoring chances as their hosts, the scoreline was perhaps a touch harsh on them, but the Knights were fully deserving of their win.

The Steeldogs then did themselves and the Knights big favour on Sunday night when they bounced back quickly from their disappointment at Elland Road Ice Arena by beating leaders Milton Keynes Lightning 3-2 at Ice Sheffield.

As a result, it remains congested among the top seven in the NIHL National standings. The Lightning remain ahead of the Knights and Hull Seahawks by just one point, with all three teams now having played 13 games.

Looking at the wider picture, only six points separate Milton Keynes from Swindon Wildcats in seventh - Aaron Nell’s team having two games in hand.

On Saturday, the Knights took control early on in the game when Finley Bradon’s strike with just 2.35 on the clock was followed two minutes later by Innes Gallacher’s second goal of the season.

Haywood’s first of the night came just under four minutes later before a close-range finish from Mac Howlett gave the Steeldogs a mountain to climb with less than two minutes of the second period having elapsed.

Just after the halfway mark, Knights’ forward Jordan Buesa was tossed from the game for a check to the head but, with the hosts killing off the five-minute penalty that resulted, there was only going to be one outcome..

A second for Haywood came less than a minute into the third further before a well-worked goal between the veteran centre, Matt Barron and Matt Bissonnette resulted in the latter firing home his eighth of the season at 49.19.

As the game wound down, Howlett popped up to double his tally in the 53rd minute to put further gloss on a clinical performance.