

GARY Clarke bagged a hat-trick as MK Lightning sealed their place in the EPL Cup semi-final with an impressive 5-2 win over Guildford Flames.

The victory puts Lightning six points clear and ensures they will finish at the top of their group with a game still to play.

Lightning opened their account after eight minutes when Mikko Skinnari played in Clarke who had only Alex Mettam to beat in goal.

But the Flames' response was instant as they hit back 26 seconds later with Milos Melicherik pulling the scores level. It was a close first period and just as it looked like it would remain even, Clarke stepped up to claim his second with a second remaining on the clock.

The Flames effectively lost the match in the next period as Chris McEwan doubled Lightning's lead with an unassisted goal before Toni Alasaarela was on target to give his side a 4-1 advantage with twenty minutes left.

With the help of Nick Poole and Daniel Croft, Clarke completed his hat-trick on the 48th minute but Lukas Smital grabbed a consolation goal for the Flames a minute later.

On Saturday Lightning also registered a 8-1 win over Wightlink Raiders in the first of their British Knockout Cup games. It was another dominant display for MK as they eased passed their Isle of Wight counterparts.

For all their possession Lightning were leading only 1-0 at the end of the first through Skinnari's opener on the sixth minute.

Nicky Watt pulled the Raiders level early in the second period but MK soon started firing with four goals in the second with two coming from Clarke while Poole and Adam Carr were also at hand to add to the score-line.

Man of the match Michael Wales joined in with a goal at the start of the final period before Skinnari and Danny Chaplen rounded of a convincing win for Lightning.

Meanwhile, Ales Perez (shoulder) and Greg Randell (fractured tibia) are set to be back in action sooner than originally expected following a weeks rest on their injuries.

Player coach, Nick Poole, told the clubs website: "Greg Randall and Al Perez visited the fracture clinic for an update on their injuries. Both were given better news and although nothing is definitive yet we are hopeful that they may be back sooner than originally anticipated.

"We are now looking at perhaps 4-5 weeks for both players instead of 6-8."

■ **LIGHTNING** turn their focus back to the league this weekend when they take on Peterborough this Saturday at home with face-off at 7pm. On Sunday they travel to Telford for a 5.30pm face-off.