

Lightning's dream start is down to new bench coach

BY SIMONE CORGAN

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MK Lightning are flying high in the English Premier League and it could all be down to their latest signing Phil Wooderson.

For the first time Lightning have drafted in a bench coach to help ease the pressure on player-coach Nick Poole and since his arrival MK have reached the top of the table and they are also on the verge of capturing a place in the semi-finals of the EPL.

"Each year the league gets better and better, and this year to ease the burden a little bit we've brought Phil Wooderson in," Poole said.

"He's in charge of the lines we run and controls the flow of the game. It helps me concentrate on what I'm doing while I'm playing and in between periods we can sit down and discuss any changes that need to be made."

Lightning have had a dream start to their season with only one defeat in all eleven games and their unbeaten run stretched to seven when they beat Bracknell Bees in the league and Chelmsford Chieftains in the cup at the weekend.

In a dramatic game at Planet Ice Lightning got one over the reigning league champions, Bracknell, with the winning goal coming in overtime.

The Bees opened the scoring early in the second period through Michal Kanka but Lightning always looked dangerous and a double from Adam Randmall saw them reverse the score within ten minutes.

Sam Oakford hit one back for the Bees at the end of the second to set up a tense final period.

And with neither side prepared to give anything away in a close twenty minutes, it went to a thrilling climax with Toni Alasaarela bagging the final goal two minutes into overtime.

The late goal sparked wild celebrations from the players, Poole said: "We were thrilled to win the game in the final moments, it is always a great feeling but it meant a lot because Bracknell are one of the toughest sides out there. We put on an entertaining game and the crowd seemed to enjoy it."

Lightning are hoping to make amends for their disappointing season last year where they failed to win silverware for the first time in five years, and they need just three points in three games to reach the semi-finals of the EPL.

Poole's goal and a penalty shot from Alasaarela helped Lightning beat Chelmsford 2-1 and move four points clear at the top of their group.

And what does Poole put his seasons good start to?

"All the players gelling, there's a good atmosphere around the place which breeds more success. Everyone is playing well and enjoying what they are doing."

■ **LIGHTNING** host Chelmsford in the cup on Saturday, face-off is at 7pm and travel to Romford on Sunday for their league match, face-off is at 5.15pm.



Only a game? Lightning players hold a mass celebration as they go top of the English Premier League

Picture Jez Tibbetts