

# Football – Hibs Hunger Humbles Hearts

Hibernian under-19s overcame city rivals Heart of Midlothian in a 2-1 victory in the Scottish Youth Cup tie at Easter Road on Saturday.

They secured their place in the 4th round after extra-time following a brace from Ross Caldwell, fighting back from a second-half Hearts goal. The game saw a reversal in league form, with the high-flying Jambos unable to repeat their earlier Edinburgh Derby victory.

Both teams attempted to take advantage of the perfect conditions and set out to play a brand of flowing football that is largely unfamiliar in Scotland. The one thousand spectators were treated to a typically hard-fought clash that could rival their senior colleagues in skill, if perhaps not composure.

Hibs started the game brightest, blazing a shot narrowly over the bar in the 5th minute before Phil Addison struck the woodwork shortly after. This proved the jolt Darren Murray's Hearts team needed with them beginning to assert themselves in midfield and test Hibs goalkeeper Paul Grant with a couple of low shots. Jamie Walker thought he had put Hearts ahead midway through the half with a spectacular overhead kick from just inside the box before it was ruled marginally offside.

Hearts' Ryan Stewart continued to harass the Hibs defence, giving them no time on the ball and making a general nuisance of himself. His perseverance was almost rewarded when the ball came to him after a direct run by David Smith, but his shot rolled timidly into Grant's gloves. Smith was again at the centre of things a few minutes later with a Hibs defender narrowly managed to block a through ball that would have

created a golden goal-scoring opportunity.

Prior to the break the game became increasingly open with chances being created and wasted at either end, with Hearts' Callum Tapping and Smith's direct running continuing to cause havoc in the Hibs defence.

The second half started at a more sedate pace with both teams fighting hard for possession and mindful of the prize at stake as the game wore on. However Hearts were finally able to prise open their opponents defence when a poorly protected throw-in near the corner flag eventually worked it's way across the box where right-back Fraser Mullen coolly slotted home.

Hearts seemed to take their foot off the accelerator after the goal, allowing Caldwell to work his way through their defence where he rounded Hearts' keeper Jack Hamilton before hitting the post. A penalty box melee ensued where Hamilton was able to block a follow-up shot before a third attempt was cleared off the line.

Hibs continued to gain control of the game, with Euan Smith wasting a great cross and heading wide from around 8 yards out. They were eventually rewarded in the closing minutes when Hearts' left-back Kevin McHattie failed to deal with a speculative through ball, allowing Caldwell to fire home into the left hand corner. McHattie did redeem himself somewhat with an impressive block in the dying seconds to prevent a Hibs victory in normal time.

Extra-time saw Hibs continue to dominate with Hearts appearing to be unable to kick back into gear and reassert their first-half authority. Indeed it would be Hibs that would strike again, when Caldwell was able to out-muscle his markers following a quick goal kick and blaze his shot past Hamilton into the net. Hearts then wasted their best chance to equalise 5 minutes later, somehow finding a way to hit the bar from 4 yards out following good work by Sam Nicholson on the left-

hand edge of the box.

The final chunk of extra-time saw the boys in maroon continue in vain to level the scoring. Walker created their best chance with a 'mazy' run that was only blocked by some excellent defensive work by Jordan Foster. But in truth Hibs continued to look the most threatening with Hearts visibly shaken by the turn in events.

To the victor the spoils, and the Hibs youngsters and fans excitedly celebrated their victory over the club they have had so little success against in the last few years. In the end Hibs deserved their win with Hearts' lack of cutting edge in the final third and lack of striking support often undoing their superior play in other areas of the pitch. Caldwell, whose style resembles that of senior striker Garry O'Connor, took his chances well and ultimately proved the difference between the two teams. With both clubs increasingly relying on their youth setups for players, it is not the last time many of those involved will meet to determine capital bragging rights.