

# Brave Hibs fight back to earn draw against Huddersfield



Hibs fought back from two goals down to earn a credible draw against Championship side Huddersfield Town at Easter Road today.

The Yorkshire club will play in the second tier of English football for the first time in eleven years after their dramatic play-off win over Sheffield United, and despite a summer of transfer speculation over their prolific goal-scorer Jordan Rhodes, the club have managed to retain the services of the Scotland international.

There was a familiar face on the visitor's bench as former Hibs keeper Nick Colgan took his seat to a warm reception from Hibs fans in the lower west stand.

Pat Fenlon started with the team that many expect will be his first choice when the season starts for real next Sunday at Tannadice.

A disappointing crowd of just over 4,000 turned out to see the new look Hibs team which contained only five players from the team who started the cup final on 19 May. Welshman David Stephens partnered captain James McPake in the centre of the defence, leaving Paul Hanlon at left back and new signing Tim Clancy on the right. The manager's new 4-2-3-1 formation saw Lewis Stevenson and Jorge Claros as holding midfield players behind Eoin Doyle, Ivan Sproule and David Wotherspoon leaving Leigh Griffiths on his own up front.

Youngsters Ross Caldwell, Sam Stanton and Danny Handling who all scored during the pre-season tour had to be content with a place on the bench alongside two trialists Alan Maybury and

Mark Kerr.

Huddersfield started brightly and Rhodes had an effort well blocked by McPake before Ben Williams was called into action twice in the space of a minute to deny Lee Novak.

The visitors took a deserved lead after 15 minutes when a through ball found both Rhodes and Lee Novak in space. The Scotland international calmly slipped the ball to Novak who passed it into the net. Before the restart, the heavens opened and a torrential shower caused everyone in the lower east stand to move to the back.

Five minutes later, Huddersfield doubled their lead when Scannell latched onto an inch perfect through ball from Novak before side footing the ball past the helpless Williams.

At this stage, Huddersfield looked as if they could score at will, but Hibs hit back on the half hour mark against the run of play when Griffiths' hit a spectacular volley past the keeper from a Wotherspoon cross.

This lifted the Hibs fans, and the Easter Road men ended the first half on top. Mark Kerr, playing as a trialist replaced Claros at half time, and Hibs continued where they left off.

On 60 minutes, Alan Maybury, also playing as a trialist, replaced Eoin Doyle and Paul Cairney replaced Paul Hanlon.

Within two minutes, Hibs got a well-deserved equaliser. Griffiths hit a first time 40 yard pass to Ivan Sproule on the right wing. The flying winger beat the full back twice before curling a 20 yard shot into the top corner to the delight of the Hibs support.

A few minutes later Sproule left the field with the cheers of the Hibs fans ringing in his ears as he was replaced by Handling.

With ten minutes left, Griffiths was replaced by Ross Caldwell

and received a standing ovation from the fans. Earlier, Griffiths had confided that he was aware that some Hibs fans were against his return due to his attitude, but he certainly changed a few minds with his performance today.

Hibs continued to dominate and always looked the likelier team to score, but the game fizzled out without further goals.





After the game, a satisfied Pat Fenlon said: "It was a sloppy start from us today. We looked a bit leggy today from the start because of the travelling and the training yesterday, but once we got going it wasn't too bad. We made a few changes in the second half but pre-season's like that. We try to pick the positives out of it and work on the negatives and make sure we put them right before next week."

Fenlon also praised Alan Maybury and Mark Kerr's contribution and said that the club will have to make a decision as to whether to offer them contracts this week. He said: "I thought the two trialists did OK, they gave us a little bit of experience. Their use of the ball was better; they kept it for us and kept the shape of the team. We know what both of them are like, we've had them on trial for a while but we don't know what we are going to go at the minute. We have to make a decision for their sake rather than ours to be honest. They need to know where they stand. We'll sit down with the powers that be over the next few days and see what we can do."

Williams, Clancy, McPake, Stephens, Hanlon, Claros, Stevenson, Sproule, Wotherspoon, Doyle, Griffiths. Subs: Antell, Caldwell, O'Hanlon, Booth, Pa Kujabi, Cairney, Handling, Stanton, Smith and two trialists.

Huddersfield: Smithies, Hunt, Clarke, Lynch, Dixon, Gobern, Clayton, Atkinson, Scannell, Rhodes, Novak. Subs Bennett,

Colgan, Woods, Norwood, Ward, .Clarke, Wallace, Lee, Kay,  
Higginbotham, Robinson, Ridehalgh, Spencer.

Attendance 4059

Photographs by J.C.Mackintosh