

# League Cup Final 1972 – Hibs 2 Celtic 1



Sunday marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hibs' League Cup victory against Celtic at Hampden Park, and The Edinburgh Reporter takes a trip down memory lane with club legend John Brownlie and author of several Hibs books, Ted Brack.

Few outside Edinburgh gave Hibs any chance when they met Jock Stein's Celtic on that cold December day in 1972. Celtic had been European Cup winners in 1967, and reached the final three years later where they lost narrowly to Feyenoord after extra time. They had won the Scottish League title seven times in a row, and many believed that their team which contained several of Stein's 'Quality Street Gang' was even better than the Lisbon Lions. If that wasn't enough, Celtic had hammered Hibs 6-1 in the Scottish Cup Final in May.

After that defeat, manager Eddie Turnbull defiantly told the press that Hibs would be back at Hampden in the near future and they would win. Certainly those supporters who watched Hibs regularly could see that Turnbull had built a tremendous team, and a sizeable number travelled to Glasgow with an air of confidence.

Amazingly, given the fact that Hibs had won three league titles in four seasons in the late 40s and early 50s, appeared in a European Cup semi-final and a Fairs Cup semi-final which they only lost after a play off, beaten giants of the game such as Barcelona, Real Madrid, Liverpool, Sporting Lisbon and Naples, and won the Summer Cup and the Drybrough Cup, they had not won a major trophy for seventy years.

Over 70,000 turned up to watch and the first half was evenly

matched, but Hibs totally dominated the second period, taking the lead in the 60th minute when Billy McNeil fouled Alan Gordon on the edge of the penalty box. Alex Edwards and Jimmy O'Rourke stood over the ball as Celtic lined up their defensive wall, and when the referee blew his whistle, Edwards flicked the ball over the wall into space. Hibs skipper Pat Stanton was first to react, smashing the ball into the net past the helpless Williams.

Six minutes later O'Rourke sent Stanton clear on the right wing before running into the box. As he did so, he pointed to where he wanted the cross to go. Stanton obliged and O'Rourke's diving header flew into the net, sending the Hibs fans wild.

Hibs should have added a third when Alan Gordon had a shot cleared off the line by McNeil, as Hibs dominated possession, but no Celtic team under Jock Stein ever gave up, and sure enough the Hoops pulled one back with thirteen minutes left when Kenny Dalglish latched onto a through ball before slotting it past Jim Herriot.

Rather than defend their slim advantage, Hibs continued to attack and comfortably saw out the 90 minutes to collect the cup which they showed off on their open topped bus parade through Edinburgh that night.

✘ Hibs right back that day was John Brownlie, and for those Hibs fans who never had the privilege to seeing him play his talent saw him capped for Scotland against Russia as a teenager. In those days it was virtually unheard of for one so young to play for their country, and only Dennis Law had worn the famous dark blue jersey at a younger age. If he were playing in this era, John Brownlie would be valued in the tens of millions of pounds. His name is still revered at Easter Road and whenever an all-time best Hibs XI is chosen, there is never any debate as to who was the club's best ever right back.

Unfortunately less than a month after the Hampden triumph, John suffered a broken leg against East Fife in the game following the famous 7-0 win over Hearts. At that time Hibs were top of the league and in the quarter final of the European Cup Winners Cup. Chairman Tom Hart predicted that Hibs would win both competitions, but everyone who was at Easter Road that cold January day realised immediately that without John Brownlie, the dream was as good as over.

John told The Edinburgh Reporter: "I have a lot of good memories about that particular game. We were all keen to do a lot better than we had in the Scottish Cup Final earlier that year when we lost 6-1 to Celtic. We all knew that we were better than that and we wanted to do ourselves justice.

"I actually scored the only goal against Rangers in the semi-final, and some of their fans still won't speak to me because of that.

"I was lucky to play as I went over on my ankle on the Monday before the final, and struggled to get fit. 'Ned' (Eddie Turnbull) kept it quiet and on the day of the match I got an injection for the pain. I managed to get through the 90 minutes but it was sore later that night.

"Celtic had a really good team at the time with players like Kenny Dalglish, Davie Hay, Danny Mcgrain, George Connolly and Lou Macari. Ned had us all up for the game telling us it was time to prove the people who had written us off wrong.

"Normally when we played Celtic I was up against Bobby Lennox, but he didn't play so Jock Stein moved Jimmy Johnstone onto the left wing. I don't know of word of my ankle injury had got out, but in any case I played well and Johnstone was subbed in the second half.

"It was a great team performance, but it was only when I watched the highlights later that I realised how well Pat Stanton had played. He was immense that day and led from the

front, scoring the first goal and setting Jimmy O'Rourke up for the second. Kenny Dalglish pulled one back for Celtic, but we were the better team and deserved to win.

"That was probably the highlight of my time with Hibs, winning a major national competition. I had just turned 20 in the March, and I played with some great players at Easter Road like Pat Stanton, John Blackley, Alex Cropley, Jimmy O'Rourke, Alan Gordon and Alex Edwards. In fact I didn't realise how good they were until I moved to Newcastle later in my career.

"After the cup win, we beat Ayr United 8-0, then Aberdeen before beating Hearts seven nil at Tynecastle. The following week, we played East Fife at Easter Road and I suffered a broken leg. Alex Edwards got booked that day and received a long suspension, and the team fell away a bit after that."

John Brownlie spent eight year at Easter Road, playing 211 times and scoring 14 goals. He moved to Newcastle United in 1978 and had spells at Middlesbrough, Hartlepool United, Berwick Rangers and Blyth Spartans. He won 7 caps for Scotland. After retiring, he managed Cowdenbeath, Meadowbank Thistle, East Stirlingshire and Arbroath.

✘ Standing on the Hampden terraces that day was Ted Brack, lifelong Hibs fan and author of several Hibs books, including 'There is a Bonny Fitba Team,' 'The Life and Times of Last Minute Reilly,' 'There's only one Sauzee,' 'Pat Stanton's Hibernian Dream Team' and 'The Game on New Year's Day. Hearts 0 Hibs 7.'

Ted recalls the game vividly and told the Edinburgh Reporter: "I approached the 1972 League Cup Final with a mixture of anticipation and apprehension. Hibs had an outstanding team full of genuinely great players and we had beaten Celtic 5-3 in the Drybrough Cup Final four months earlier. However, Jock Stein's great team, which was among the very best in Europe at that time had beaten Hibs 6-1 in the Scottish Cup Final the

previous May and would be thirsting for revenge after losing five goals to a domestic rival, a possibly unparalleled number of goals to be lost in one game during Stein's tenure. Hibs hadn't won a major national cup competition for 70 years.

"In the event, I needn't have worried. Hibs were magnificent and dominated the majority of the game. Pat Stanton played the game of his life. He was a man on a mission after the Scottish Cup Final drubbing handed out by Celtic earlier in the year. Pat knew Hibs were much better than that result suggested and he set out to prove a point. He certainly succeeded as he scored Hibs first goal, created their second for Jimmy O'Rourke and hit the post as well.

"When Kenny Dalglish pulled a goal back for Celtic near the end, some Hibs teams would have panicked. Not this one though. As Alex Cropley told me when I was researching my latest book 'The Game on New Year's Day', 'We took the game back to Celtic. We had pace and movement right through our team and that saw us through. We were like a well-oiled machine that day.'

"As a Hibs supporter that match brought me great joy. Celtic had players like Billy McNeill, Jimmy Johnstone and Kenny Dalglish in their ranks yet Hibs played them off the park and lifted a national trophy in the process. It doesn't get much better."

This Hibs team that day was: Jim Heriot, John Brownlie, Erich Schaedler, Pat Stanton, Jim Black, John Blackley, Alex Edwards, Jimmy O'Rourke, Alan Gordon, Alex Cropley and Arthur Duncan. The substitute was Johnny Hamilton.

The Celtic team was: Evan Williams, Danny McGrain, Jim Brogan, Pat McCluskey, Billy McNeil, David Hay, Jimmy Johnstone, George Connolly, Kenny Dalglish, Harry Hood and Lou Macari. The substitute was Tommy Callaghan.

Attendance 71,696