

Honours Even in hard-fought Under 20s Derby



The mini-derby between Hibs and Hearts Under 20s ended all square at Linlithgow on Tuesday night, leaving Hibs three points ahead of their city rivals in the Clydesdale Bank U20 League. Hearts twice took the lead in an entertaining game which featured several players with first team experience, only for Hibs to fight back to secure a share of the points.

Hearts started with right back Jamie Hamill, who is getting in some much needed match practice following a lengthy injury, Jason Holt, Gordon Smith, Billy King, Dale Carrick and Denis Prychynenko, whilst Hibs fielded teenage strikers Danny Handling and Ross Caldwell.

Hearts were unlucky not to be awarded an early penalty after Jordon Forster was penalised for a trip on Gordon Smith on the edge of the box, but the referee gave the Hibs defender the benefit of the doubt and awarded a free kick.

Danny Handling then went close with a well struck shot from just outside the box which went narrowly wide. Hamill showed the crowd that he is ready for a first team comeback with a terrific last ditch tackle to prevent David Paul from opening the scoring then Denis Prychynenko, spurned a great chance by blasting the ball over the bar from close range.

Just before the break Paul latched onto a David Gold pass but mishit his shot to the relief of the Hearts fans.

Hamill was replaced at half time and Hearts started the second period strongly, taking the lead in the 53rd minute when Carrick struck a low right-footed shot into the bottom left corner from 12 yards. Hibs fought back immediately and

Handling's well struck shot rebounded off the post from a narrow angle.

Hamilton then did well to turn a Paul effort round the post before Hibs equalised from the resulting corner-kick. Ryan Baptie's excellent cross found Forster who rose unmarked to head the ball down into the back of net.

Hearts quickly regained the advantage through Billy King who struck a powerful shot high into the net with Grant well beaten.

Handling went close with a half-volley which was well saved by Hamilton, as Hibs pressed for the equaliser, which eventually came near the end, when another well taken corner by Baptie was headed into the top corner of the net by Robert Wilson.

With time running out, Ross Caldwell had the chance to clinch all three points when he latched onto a through ball from Paul, but the youngster failed to hit the target.

As it was, Hearts almost grabbed the winner when Hibs' Dean Horribine mishit a clearance from Adam King's corner, but thankfully for the youngster, Grant was on hand to the ball brilliantly tipped over the bar.

After the game, Hibs' Head of Academy Coaching James McDonough told Hibs TV: "We set our stall out to have a real go at Hearts; playing with two strikers. I thought we looked very solid; the boys took on board everything we had worked on in training and delivered it in the match.

"We normally like to build from the back but that can be difficult when there are few gaps in midfield to play the next pass.

"I thought we were very effective in their half and had the majority of play and chances in the first half. All the goals came in the second half with us coming from behind twice

showing great character and fantastic attitude to take a point which we at least deserved.

“Hearts are normally well set up with corners, but we came up with two of our own right off the training pitch. Danny Handling hit the post near the end and we nearly scored a third which would have won us the game.

“When you look at the two teams, Hearts had eight that have played first team, three overage players too and our team were all under 20 with only three that have featured at first team level.

“So it was a creditable performance from our whole group. I’m delighted with my players – seven points in the last eight days from three very hard games!”

Hibs: Grant, Black, Baptie, Gold, Forster, Wilson, Handling, Horribine, Caldwell, Doyle, Paul, Dunsmore, Horne, Martynuik, Crane, Beaton, Todd, Court.

Hearts: Hamilton, Hamill, McGhee, Brad McKay, Prychynenko, A King, B King, D Smith, G Smith, Holt, Carrick, Nicholson, Millar, Beith, Scott, Keegan, Oliver, McMillan.