

Mickey Weir believes new signings can help Hibs' youngsters progress in Europe



Hibs legend Mickey Weir is delighted that Pat Fenlon has brought in experienced players such as Owain Tudur Jones and Liam Craig to augment the young talent ahead of next week's Europa League Qualifying Round tie against either Drogheda United or Malmo, and warns that the first leg, which will be played away from home, is vital if the club want to progress to the group stages.

The fans' favourite was no stranger to European football as a player, playing in three memorable ties without defeat, during his time with the Easter Road club.

In 1989, he starred in the home leg of the UEFA cup tie against Hungarian side Videoton, which Hibs won 1-0 thanks to a goal from defender Graham Mitchell. Few gave Hibs much chance of progressing, but Alex Miller's team returned with a 3-0 victory. Weir had to be content with a seat on the bench that night, but the lifelong Hibs fan enjoyed the view as his team-mates took an early lead when Keith Houchen headed in a Graham Mitchell cross. Gareth Evans added a second and John Collins a third to cap a wonderful evening in the Sostol Stadium.

Hibs were drawn against Belgium side RFC Liege in the next round and Weir again played in the home leg which ended in a 0-0 draw, with Houchen missing a penalty. A late goal in Belgium ended the club's hope.

In 1992, Hibs qualified for the UEFA Cup and Weir played against Anderlecht at Easter Road. The home side took an early

lead thanks to Murdo McLeod, but the Belgians equalised in the 39th minute with a disputed penalty. Despite constant pressure from Hibs, it was Anderlecht who took the lead against the run of play when Van Vossen lofted the ball over John Burridge.

Weir then received a controversial second yellow card for a foul on De Wolf, ruling him out of the second leg, before Pat McGinlay equalised. Two weeks later, a Darren Jackson strike was not enough as Hibs drew 1-1, losing out on the away goals rule.

Weir is now a coach with Lowland League side Vale of Leithen, and the Edinburgh Reporter caught up with him at the Hibs Training Ground at East Mains where his side were taking part in a pre-season friendly against Hibs Under 20s.

When asked about his thought on his former club's chances in the Europa League, he said: "It's early days but the first result is most important. It's very difficult coming back and obviously we want to stay in the campaign and if we can just get by the next hurdle, I'll be delighted to get the first result.

"The most important thing for the manager will be to keep all his good players fit. It's a young squad this year which could be helpful on many respects but if we can get over this hurdle which will be a difficult one, the more games you get, especially in Europe, the more experience you get then we can maybe kick on.

"The young players have made a big difference. There's one or two have stood up and last year, at the end of the season showed their temperament, especially against Hearts in a local derby and then being thrown into the cup final and that's great experience for the younger ones. I think there are one or two there who could really have a bright future but it's still early days.

“The manager is wanting to improve his squad and he has brought in relatively experienced players and that’s what they need. With too many young boys there will be a burn out at some stage and I think that he realised that and brought a few in and hopefully they will settle into the Hibs and do us a good turn.”

Listen to the interview here.

[listen to ‘Mickey Weir’ on Audioboo](#)

Hibs play the winners of Drogheda United and Malmo who meet on Thursday night in Sweden. The first leg ended in a 0-0 draw at the home of Shamrock Rovers in Dublin.