

# Football – Hibs v Motherwell



*Hibernian vs Motherwell, Scottish Premiership, Easter Road, Sunday 4th August, Kick off 1:15 pm.*

by Johns Stephens

In the Scottish Premier League era the fixture between Hibs and Motherwell had the knack of a delivering a glut of goals. In the three games last season there were no less than 14 scored in the ties.

In the newly branded Scottish Premiership it was Motherwell who snatched the only goal of the game as new signing Herni Anier coolly dispatched past Ben Williams late on.

Hibs started the brighter of the sides however James McFadden had the first chance of the match. Recent Hibernian recruit Michael Nelson however blocked the talented forwards advancement and effort on goal following a miss-kick from Williams. Fraser Mullen then fancied his chances from distance but his effort was well off target.

Just minutes later Iain Vigurs had the opportunity to put the visitors in front. A defence splitting lofted pass found the former Ross County midfielder but his effort was wide of the target. It was then Hibs' turn to test the resilience of their opponents defence. A neat exchange of passes within the Hibernian midfield resulted in a corner being won. Liam Craig's delivery was met well by Nelson but it was headed off the line and then cleared for another corner by the Motherwell defence.

The next delivery was dealt with well however Alex Harris was teed up for a shot at goal from outside the area which was deflected wide. The game became full of half chances for both

sides with the ball being knocked high and attempting to go over the heads of defenders. However there were no clear-cut chances.

Keith Lasley was the next player to seriously threaten as his rasping drive from the edge of the box was caught well by Williams. Just minutes later McFadden crossed in for Robert McHugh however his header drifted away from goal. Craig and fellow summer signing James Collins linked up well to provide Harris with another shooting opportunity. The academy graduate however fired over the bar from 20 yards out.

The end to end nature of the chances continued as Nelson managed to stave off two Motherwell attacks before Paul Lawson opportunistically attempted to chip Williams from distance, his effort floated harmlessly over the bar. Iain Vigurs' corner for Motherwell was right into the danger area and following a scramble the ball was cleared with Hibs' Welsh international midfielder Owain Tudor-Jones left on the ground following an accidental collision with Shaun Hutchinson.

Collins threatened the Motherwell defence on the counter-attack following the clearance of a corner from the Steelmen. Collins held the ball up before exchanging passes with Scott Robertson. The striker attempted a shot from a tight angle and could only hit the side netting. The final chance of the half fell to Vigurs as he struck Stuart Ramsden's knock down from the edge of the area. However, like his earlier chance, he blazed the ball over the bar.

The second half picked up where the first left off, both the sides enjoying large amounts of time on the ball with no real killer instinct and only a few half chances for either side. Hibs began to turn the screw as Craig was brought down outside the box by Hutchinson. The number 10 then stepped up to the plate with a free-kick which was held well by Hollis. John Sutton had a header loop over the bar for Motherwell before Mullen crossed in for Collins and with the

striker well placed he headed wide.

Hibs were looking likely to score and when Kevin Thomson marauded from midfield with the ball he opted to shoot from 25 yards and with the ball destined for the bottom corner Hollis pulled off a fantastic diving save to deny the home side the lead. Undeterred Hibs ploughed forward and tried to open the scoring as Motherwell struggled to deal with the attacking burst from the Leith based side. Harris cracked in a ball which flashed across the face of the six yard box with Craig only a fraction away from connecting with the ball. Lewis Stevenson then burst forward following a poor clearance from the Motherwell defence. His attempted pass was hooked clear, but yet again it was poor and fell kindly to Robertson as the midfielder connected with a sizzling volley.

Hollis was equal to the fantastic effort and tipped the ball over the bar with a great save.

Nelson was the next Hibs player to try his luck at goal, his effort however was harmlessly high of the goal. Following a spate of substitutions the game changed somewhat as the more direct Francis-Angol was brought on for McFadden and McHugh made way for Anier.

Worryingly for Hibs Harris was replaced by Sam Stanton after the promising youngster was the subject of a tough tackle from Hutchinson. The winger appeared to limp off the field of play and the defender was booked for his challenge. Motherwell tested Williams as Sutton was released by Vigurs' long ball however the English shot-stopper was equal to the efforts from the former Hearts striker. From the resultant corner Stephen McManus bulleted a header which was destined for the top corner only to see Williams again come to his side's rescue with a fine stop.

The Hibs goalkeeper was not destined to keep his clean sheet for long though, as a powerful header from Hutchinson released

Anier in the exact same spot as Sutton had exploited moments before. This time the Estonian forward tricked Williams into diving first before calmly lofting the ball over the despairing reach of the goalkeeper.

Hibs tried in vain to haul themselves back into the game and had a penalty shout in the 90<sup>th</sup> minutes. Tudor-Jones was seemingly shoved by McManus as they challenged in the air. Referee Bobby Madden however waved away the appeals as the game petered out to a home defeat for the Edinburgh side.

Attendance: 9,237