

# Hibs 5-3 Stranraer: Liam Craig is Hat Trick Hero



Unlike the Proclaimers, I can't 'understand why Stranraer lie so lowly' especially if they play like this every week.

In the end, Hibs proved too powerful for their First Division opponents, but the brave Stranraer players gave their all and deserve praise for their part in this entertaining eight goal encounter.

Manager Pat Fenlon made two changes to his starting XI with Abdellah Zoubir and Rowan Vine replacing Paul Heffernan who was cup tied and Kevin Thomson.

Hibs started slowly and found themselves behind after only three minutes as Longworth headed Aitken's corner kick past Williams to the delight of the small band of travelling supporters.

Fenlon's men fought back and were level five minutes later when Vine sent an inch perfect cross into the box and Liam Craig headed the ball into the net from six yards.

Michael Nelson then brought out a sensational save from David Mitchell from a powerful header before the tricky Zoubir was denied by a fine block at his near post. Nelson then Collins both went close before Alan Maybury hit a stunning drive inches wide of the far post.

Every time Zoubir got on the ball, there was a buzz around the stadium, and his efforts finally paid off in the 34<sup>th</sup> minute when he cut in from the left wing, beat three defenders and struck a powerful strike which took a deflection off Rumsby and went in off the post.

A minute later Hibs went 3-1 up after a dangerous cross from Vine was deflected into his own net by Rumsby.

The biggest cheer of the night came at half time when Leigh Griffiths appeared on the pitch to make the half time draw, and the fans' favourite received a standing ovation from the Hibs' supporters.

Ryan McGivern replaced Alan Maybury at half time and Lewis Stevenson took over the right back spit.

Hibs looked as though they had wrapped things up two minutes after the restart when Vine's excellent lob found Craig in behind the defence to slide in his second of the night.

At this point the fans were expecting a cricket score, but Stranraer fought back and scored two goals in three minutes to reduce the deficit to one.

Aitken picked up the ball on the half way line was allowed to advance unchallenged before curling a thirty yard effort into the far corner of the net, then three minutes later under pressure Nelson headed into his own net from Aitken's corner kick.

This sparked some life back into Hibs and both Craig and Zoubir had decent chances before the home side eventually secured their place in the next round of the cup.

On the hour mark, good interplay between Vine and Collins ended with a powerful drive from the former Swindon striker which struck the arm of Aitken and referee Crawford Allan immediately pointed to the spot.

Craig grabbed the ball and sent his penalty kick straight down the middle high into the net to grab his hat-trick.

Stranraer refused to lie down and created several decent chances, but Hibs held on for the victory.

Hibs: Williams, Maybury (McGivern 46'), Nelson, Hanlon, Stevenson, Robertson, Taiwo, Craig, Vine (Caldwell 79'), Zoubir (Stanton 83'), Collins. Substitutes not used: Murdoch, McPake.

Stranraer: Mitchell, Rumsby, Kinnaird, Robertson, McKeown, Aitken, Stirling, Gallagher (Docherty 80'), Grehan, Longworth (McKenna 73'), Borris (Corcoran 56'). Substitutes not used: Fahey, MacGregor.

Referee: Crawford Allan.

Attendance: 6,431.