

Handling proves fitness ahead of Celtic clash



Hibs youngster Danny Handling proved his fitness ahead of today's clash with Celtic by racing a Supercharged Lotus Elise at Easter Road on Thursday to publicise the Murray Lotus Challenge.

His impressive performance will probably earn him a place on the bench; however he accepts that walking straight back into the first team after injury was unlikely to happen due to the standard of midfielders available for selection.

Handling said: "It's a massive squad and everyone's got massive ability, so to get back in the team is going to be hard for anyone. We've won five in the last seven games, so that says how much the team are improving. I'm fit enough. I've been doing runs; I've been doing a bit extra. I'd say I'm back to where I was before, so it's all come together again.

"It's obviously one of the biggest games of the season against one of the best teams. They're Scottish champions for a reason, so it's a very big game for everyone. I feel we can beat anyone here on our day, with the fans behind us. We won 1-0 last time, and did well to get a result, because they are Scottish champions.

"They've probably got the best squad on paper, but they are beatable. I came on that day, for the last five or ten minutes. At the time I wasn't really playing a lot, just in and out the team. I came on that day to try and defend the lead – so they'd know who to blame. Thankfully, we got the result. You need to show them a bit of respect, because they are good players and very talented. But you have to show them what you can do, not lie down, and fight back. And hopefully

that's enough on the day."

The teenager also came on for the last 20 minutes of the Scottish Cup Final last season, but by that stage, Celtic were well in command, but he believes that the experience has made him a better player.

"To come on in a Scottish Cup final against anybody is a great achievement in itself. I was only 18, so to get on in a game like that was massive. I was up against Emilio Izaguirre. At first, I didn't know what to think because he's big, he's quite fast: I was quite cautious. But once I got on I wasn't too bad – I was more focused on my own game. I would say there's not a lot of nerves now. Because I've played quite a few games, I know what it's like at first-team level. I know what the fans expect and what the tempo's like, so I'm used to it. Games like this can bring out nerves in the best of players, so there are still a few nerves before."

The Murray Lotus Challenge is open for all supporters to participate in and involves sprinting over 18 yards to record a quicker time than a high-performance car.

The quickest supporters (three adults and three kids) over 18-yards will compete in the Murray Lotus Challenge pitch side at half-time to win a range of brilliant prizes; including a VIP day at Easter Road.

Racing beside the hallowed Easter Road pitch, Handling went up through the gears to record an impressive time of 2.52 seconds over 18 yards – marginally behind the time set by the Supercharged Lotus Elise (1.95).