

All square in Butcher's first game in charge



Terry Butcher's Hibs career started with a 0-0 draw against St Mirren in Paisley today, and whilst ending the run of four successive defeats for the club, they were still unable to find the net after first choice striker Paul Heffernan was taken off with an injury early in the game.

Despite that however, Hibs dominated possession, particularly in the second half and should have had a penalty when James Collins was clearly brought down by Darren McGregor in the box.

The new manager surprised a few with his selection, retaining the same back four that played against Inverness two weeks ago although he admitted that James McPake would have played but for a last minute back injury.

In midfield, Kevin Thomson and Tom Taiwo were replaced by Paul Cairney and Liam Craig whilst James Collins made way for Danny Handling.

A large travelling support of 1200 welcomed Terry Butcher who took his place in the dugout following an appeal against his ban.

After much speculation Liam Craig was named captain for the day, replacing Ben Williams although that could change again when McPake returns from injury.

St Mirren started brightly and should have taken the lead in the second minute when Steven Thompson found himself clear in the box, but the normally deadly striker's shot went wide.

Two minutes later, Hibs were forced into making a substitution

when Paul Heffernan had to leave the field with a suspected torn thigh muscle and was replaced by James Collins.

Hibs were showing plenty determination and several 'meaty' challenges went in before Jordan Forster was booked for a late tackle.

Hibs first real chance came in the 21st minute when Collins got his head to a Ryan McGivern cross at the near post but his effort was easily saved by Kello.

Hibs were then denied a clear penalty two minutes later when Darren McGregor brought down Collins inside the area, but referee Steven McLean waved away the claims to the annoyance of the Hibs fans.

On the 34th minutes, McGregor lost Collins at a corner and his header beat Williams, but Alan Maybury was on hand to head clear off the line.

Good play by Danny Handling created another chance, but he over hit his through ball to Collins and the danger was cleared.

Handling then set up Collins again on the edge of the box, but the former Swindon Town striker's shot was blocked before the ball fell to Cairney but his low hit cross was cleared.

The Saints created an early chance in the second half and Paul Hanlon did well to clear a McGinn cross then Naismith struck a volley just wide.

Taiwo replaced Cairney and Williams did well to save from Thompson before Hibs won a series of corners as they pressed for the three points.

Kello did well to hold a dangerous Maybury cross after good work from Collins, then Collins did well to run the channels before sending a low cross into the box which Naismith turned

past for a corner.

Craig's cross was dropped by Kello and Robertson's goal bound header was blocked before the ball was scrambled clear.

Kello then did well to save a header from Craig and Paul Hanlon headed just wide from a corner. Robertson then tried a long range effort which was blocked.

Robertson set up Collins on the right but the big striker's effort went well wide of the post, then Handling appeared to be fouled on the edge of the box by McGregor but the referee played advantage when he was able to find Stevenson, but his cross was easily taken by Kello.

Ross Caldwell replaced Handling with ten minutes remaining then Robertson again found Collins who stumbled at the crucial moment as he prepared to shoot.

Liam Craig has a long range effort blocked into time added on and McGinn shot inches past with the last kick of the ball.

At the final whistle, Butcher applauded the travelling fans and directed the players to do likewise.

After the game Liam Craig told Sky TV: "If we can keep more clean sheets, more often than not we will win football games. It was a good start and the manager got the reaction that he was looking for and hopefully we can build on this. He just wants us to be positive and believe in ourselves and get forward a lot quicker and we showed that today and put a lot of pressure on St Mirren as well. It's a great honour to be the Hibs captain. When the manager told me yesterday that I'd be given the opportunity I was delighted with that and hopefully I can lead them to success now."

A happy Terry Butcher said: "It was great. I wanted commitment from the players and we got that plus they can play a bit as

well. The players all said that they enjoyed it.

“When asked about the penalty, he diplomatically replied: “The sun was in my eyes; the sun was in the referee’s eyes as well! The boys are adamant that it was a penalty. We didn’t get into the box enough in the first half, but we said in the second half that it would open up as it generally does and we would get opportunities and we did.

“All my players were terrific but I thought that Danny Handling was exceptional. I’ve seen one training session with him on Thursday and he just ticked the box for me. He was out on his feet when we took him off but what a contribution he has made already.”

St Mirren: Kello, Naismith, McGregor, McAusland, Kelly, Newton, Van Zanten, McLean, McGinn, McGowan, Thompson. Subs Cornell, Mair, Harkins, Caprice, Reilly, Grainger, Stewart.

Hibs: Williams, Maybury, Hanlon, Forster, McGivern, Stevenson, Craig, Robertson, Cairney, Handling, Heffernan. Subs: Murdoch, Collins, Caldwell, Thomson, Taiwo, Tudur Jones, Zoubir

Ref Steven McLean