

# Danny Handling hopes to keep place in team to face Ross County



Hibs' youngster Danny Handling was a surprise starter last weekend against St Mirren, yet he emerged as man of the match and won praise from his new manager for his efforts. The under 21 internationalist is hoping to retain his place for today's cup tie against Ross County in Dingwall, a ground that Hibs have never won at.

Speaking at the club's Training Centre, Handling said: "Terry Butcher has come in and given me an opportunity to show what I can do. Obviously he's liked what he's seen so long may that continue.

'It's been enjoyable. We only trained once on the Thursday. That was the first time the gaffer had seen me – and I think I made an impression. I felt as if I did quite well. The boss was happy enough to put me in the team against St Mirren and I think he was happy enough. So I'm enjoying my football. I didn't score a hat-trick in that training session. I just think the manager likes people who work hard and put the effort in – honest players. I try to be the best I can be. If that's what the gaffer likes it's good enough for me."

"The manager definitely wants the ball forward quicker, he's more direct. It has to go forward as fast as we can. That's obviously good for strikers but there is also a lot of pressure and responsibility because you have to keep possession and wait for players to get in support. I'm enjoying it and it's going well enough so let's hope it continues.

Hibs players travelled to the Highlands last night to prepare for the game against hoodoo team Ross County whom they have never beaten in a competitive game. The teams met at Easter Road in the Scottish Cup quarter final when John Hughes was in charge, and with Hibs 2-1up, Derek Riordan had a goal chalked off for offside which TV replays showed was a wrong decision, before the Staggies equalised. County then won the replay and beat Celtic in the semi-finals before losing to Dundee United in the final.

Handling is unable to give a reason for the hoodoo. He continued: "I don't know why Hibs' record against Ross County is so poor. We've been unlucky but we're not focusing on that but we're going there trying to win, we won't be mucking about. We'll be positive from the start.

"There is a bit of pressure because we've been to the last two finals, obviously without winning – but we want to reach that stage again. Once you get there it's unbelievable. It's hugely different to your ordinary games. It's a massive pitch, a huge stadium as well as a grand occasion and a great experience.

"You get older fans coming up and begging Hibs to win the Scottish Cup as soon as possible. You just have to take it on the chin, listen to them and hopefully please them.

Michael Nelson and Jason Cummings who scored a hat trick for the Under 20s in midweek are added to the squad.