

# Hibs U20s move to top of table following 5-0 defeat of Ross County



Hibs moved to the top of the SPFL Under 20s league with a superb 5-0 win against Ross County at the Energy Assets Arena in Livingston last night.

Head of Academy Coaching, James McDonaugh selected an experienced side with first team squad players Michael 'The Phantom' Nelson, Tom Taiwo, Ross Caldwell, Jason Cummings and Sam Stanton starting the game.

Stanton opened the scoring in the 10<sup>th</sup> minute, then six minutes later former Spurs defender Tom Gardiner added a second.

Gardiner added a third before the break with a fine strike the Cummings continued his prolific form to make it 4-0 on 56 minutes.

Stanton rounded off the scoring with ten minutes remaining.

After the game McDonaugh told Hibernian TV: "I thought Tom Gardiner was good in the first-half. For his first goal, he attacked the ball well and his second goal was a very good goal and he showed great feet to score. In the second-half he was maybe a bit untidy with one or two things and he'll look at those and want to improve that, but overall I was pleased and his last couple of games for the under-20s have been really good."

The coach also expressed his delight with the way in which the players have responded since their 5-1 defeat to Rangers in the Youth Cup at Ibrox.

He said: "I've been delighted with the players and that should be the biggest headline. People are always full of criticism, but the experts and the fans need to realise that this is development football and developing footballers is the main aim.

"But they have been critical and have criticised what I said to the players after the Rangers game, at the end of the day our job is to develop footballers but you have to remind them what is acceptable and what is not acceptable.

"I'll credit the players and I'll pat them on the back and put the arm around their shoulder, but I'll also criticise them if they need criticising."

Since the Rangers' defeat, McDonaugh's side have won 4-0 at Hamilton, recorded back-to-back 7-1 victories, battled to a draw against Burntisland Shipyard at the weekend before scoring another five goals against Ross County.

McDonaugh continued: "Off the pitch, I'll coach them and I'll talk to them and try to develop them as people and footballers and that is what we've done. But massive credit has to go to the players – the players have been brilliant. They got beat off Rangers and it was a confidence destroyer.

"24 goals in five games is fantastic, and the players, not just the ones that played tonight, but the experienced ones that have helped and the ones that have played East of Scotland as well because there is a big group of players there and I think they have all been different class."

The performances of Todd and Caldwell who was booked near the end, also drew praise from McDonaugh who watched on as both recorded assists.

McDonaugh said: "Max Todd was really exciting to watch in the first-half by putting crosses into the box and players scoring off his crosses again.

“Ross gets frustrated because he is a perfectionist and that’s it. I’ve known him for a long time and that is why he gets frustrated, I don’t think it was an off-night for him.

“I thought he worked really hard and himself and Jason were a handful, they worked together and played off each other. Ross didn’t get his name on the score sheet but he set up a goal and I’d have hated to be playing against him tonight, I thought he played well.”

Hibernian under-20s: Sean Murdoch, Andrew Black, Ryan Baptie, Tom Taiwo, Tom Gardiner, Michael Nelson, Euan Smith (Taylor Hendry, 82), Sammy Stanton, Jason Cummings, Ross Caldwell, Max Todd (Jamie Beaton, 82). Unused substitutes: Kleton Perntreou, Aaron Dunsmore, Bob Wilson, Neil Martyniuk, Jordan Sinclair.