Ross County 0-2 Hibernian: Comfortable win for Hibs in Dingwall

Goals from defenders Michael Nelson and Jordon Forster secured a two goal victory over Ross County at the Global Energy Stadium in Dingwall yesterday, and moved the Easter Road side to within a point of St Johnstone in the top six.

Amazingly this was the first time that Hibs had more than a single goal in 13 matches since late September against Stranraer

Terry Butcher asked the players whether they wanted to travel on Christmas day and stay in a hotel prior to the game, but they decided to travel on the morning of the match although the wisdom of that decision was called into question when the bus broke down en route resulting in a pre-match meal of bacon and sausage rolls.

Thankfully a replacement bus meant that the team arrived in Dingwall in tome for kick off and Butcher retained the same starting XI from the previous match at Easter Road against St Johnstone with youngster Jason Cummings earning his second first-team start.

Kevin Thomson was replaced on the bench by Owain Tudur Jones.

A minute's silence to pay respect for Under 20s star David Paul who tragically died at the weekend was impeccably observed by both sets of supporters.

Hibs dominated from the start and took the lead in the 18th minute after James Collins won a corner which Paul Cairney

delivered into the box. Big Michael Nelson met the ball with a powerful header which flew into the net off the underside of the crossbar to the delight of the travelling support.

The brave defender who continues to wear a protective mask after suffering a facial injury against Celtic in October required treatment following his goal, but was able to come back onto the field of play.

Six minutes later another corner, this time from Liam Craig almost led to a second goal, but Jordon Forster could only head the ball towards Fraser in the Ross County goal.

Graham Carey went close for the Staggies with a well taken free-kick from 25 yards which rustled the side netting of Ben Williams' goal.

Cairney had the chance to double Hibs' advantage just before the break but his free-kick went well wide.

Hibs started the second half strongly and Lewis Stevenson found Cairney but his strike deflected behind for a corner.

Carey hit the post before the Easter Road men added a second from youngster Jordon Forster with a fine header from a Cairney corner; his first for the club.

Fraser then did well to stop a 20 yard Ryan McGivern strike then Carey struck the woodwork again but Butcher's defence held strong to secure the three points.

Afterwards a delighted Hibs boss told BBC Scotland: "This week has been really tough for the players and everyone wants to dedicate that win to David Paul and his family. It's a nice way to pay tribute to such a wonderful boy."

"We didn't have the ideal journey up because our bus conked out at Broxden Services and we had to wait an hour and 20 minutes for the replacement. Our pre-match meal was bacon butties and sausage rolls — not exactly a dietician's delight.

The lads will want that every week but I'm not going to give it to them.

We scored off two set-pieces which the boys work hard at. It's all about the delivery and Paul Cairney put two great balls into the box. We've got good height in the team, so we need the ball in the right areas.

"Ross County piled men forward and we stood up strong, they didn't really break through us. We were slightly fortunate, with them hitting the frame of the goal twice – but apart from that Ben Williams didn't have a shot to save; he's got clean knees."

Ross County: Fraser, Micic, Boyd, McLean, Gordon (Mustafi 68), Brittain, Kettlewell, Quinn, Carey, De Leeuw (Cooper 67), Luckassen (Glen 46). Subs not used: Brown, Maatsen, Steven Ross, Klok.

Hibernian: Williams, Forster, Nelson, Hanlon, McGivern, Cairney, Robertson, Craig , Stevenson, Cummings (Handling, 65), Collins (Jones, 85). Unused substitutes: Murdoch, Maybury, Stanton, Zoubir, Caldwell.

Attendance: 3,383

Photo by John Preece

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