

Terry Butcher expects competitive game against Celtic in the Lion's Den



After Pat Fenlon's Hibs side played Celtic at Easter Road earlier this season, a raging Neil Lennon described Hibs tackling as 'shocking' and one in particular by Rowan Vine as 'rugby-esque', before suggesting reprisals when the teams met again.

As he spoke, Hibs' defender Michael Nelson was heading to hospital with a fractured cheekbone which still requires him to wear a protective mask and Vine was composing his response on twitter resulting in a censure from the SFA.

The pair are due to meet again on Saturday at Parkhead, but Terry Butcher insists that the past is in the past and the ill feeling has been forgotten by both teams:

He said: "We have moved on from that. I certainly think Neil has and I know we have as well – although, whether Michael Nelson has, I am not too sure. No, that is history. It happened before my time. We watched the game and we saw what happened as well as the aftermath of that but I think you have got to be competitive against Celtic and you have got to be strong.

"I think the game itself was a very competitive one, especially when Hibs were 1-0 up. They had a lead to protect and Celtic threw everything at them and eventually got the equaliser. "When you are fighting for a victory then, yes, you are going to give that bit extra to protect that goal lead.

"I can see how it happened. I don't think it was over the top.

It was just the players trying to protect that lead and make sure that Celtic didn't score.

"I would have loved to have played in that game myself. It is one I would have relished and I am sure Neil [Lennon] would have liked that as well. Sometimes it is Scottish football and British football at its best when there is no quarter asked and none given between two sides."

Celtic are of course on top form having thrashed Hearts 7-0 at Tynecastle then scoring five without reply against Motherwell at Fir Park, so Butcher knows that his players will have to be at their best if they are to take anything from the game.

He continued: "We have to fight our corner and we have been stronger, physically as well as mentally, since we have been here. We want to improve and we have to be that way physically and mentally on Saturday anyway. As long as we can compete fairly in challenges then I will be happy."

"We are going into the lion's den, into the cauldron. I have been there with Caley Thistle this season and that was 2-2. We want to be prepared for any challenge that Celtic throw at us, combat that and then see how we go.

"It would be very brave to really have a go at Celtic and the team we have is the lowest scoring in the Premiership so, from that point of view. Against Celtic, you have to be a little bit tight.

"It can hurt your morale and it isn't nice if it affects your goal difference as well. Ours is not particularly good at the moment but, if we can get a nice, solid performance against them, then it would be good coming back from Parkhead knowing the boys did the best they could. And, who knows...What the boys have shown me is resilience and a spirit – there is more steel about the team. That has to come to the fore on Saturday and I am confident that it will.

“Since I have been here, they have shown tremendous resilience and toughness. They know what to expect. I asked those who had won at Parkhead to put their hands up and quite a few did, me and Maurice included.

“They have good memories and victories and good performances and as a footballer, you tend to hang onto those.