

# Hibs 0-4 Celtic: Hibs fans' fury at referee Craig Thomson



Once again, the main talking point amongst Hibs' supporters at the end of the game was the 'performance' of referee Craig Thomson during the club's four goal defeat to champions Celtic at Easter Road today.

Apart from ignoring two first half penalty claims, the referee awarded a dubious free kick against Michael Nelson when the ball struck his hand from less than two yards away, a decision which infuriated the fans and manager alike, particularly since that led to the second and decisive goal.

Whilst Celtic deserved their victory, even Neil Lennon admitted that the final scoreline flattered his team.

Manager Butcher made four changes to last week's line up with Paul Cairney and Jason Cummings dropping to the bench whilst Ryan McGivern missed the game due to injury and Scott Robertson due to suspension.

Paul Hanlon, Owain Tudur Jones and Kevin Thomson also missed the game through injury.

Sam Stanton was handed his first start whilst Alex Harris started his first game since returning from injury whilst Tom Taiwo and Abdellah Zoubir were surprise inclusions.

Rowan Vine made the bench along with Dean Horribine.

Hibs started brightly with James Collins forcing Efe Ambrose into a needless corner kick which resulted in Harris sending in a dangerous shot which flew just wide of the post.

Celtic took the lead in the seventh minute however following a

defensive mix up between Jordon Forster and Michael Nelson which allowed the ball to fall to Chris Commons inside the box, and the midfielder calmly slotted the ball into the net past Ben Williams.

Four minutes later Hibs were denied a clear penalty when James Collins was brought down by Van Dijk however referee Craig Thomson waved play on to the fury of the Hibs fans.

Harris then sent a deep hanging cross to the back post, but Nelson's header went straight at Fraser Forster.

Teenager Stanton almost levelled the scoring when he latched onto Harris' pass before beating Ambrose and firing in a powerful drive which was beaten away by Forster before Izzaguire hooked clear under pressure from Collins.

From the resultant corner, van Dijk appeared to push Nelson in the back as he was about to jump for the ball, but once again the referee ignored the Hibs' pleas.

Stanton then showed fine skill to get away from Izzaguire but his effort flew over the bar from the edge of the box.

On 56 minutes a terrific curling effort from Zoubir looked to be heading for the top corner but was beaten away by Forster's fingertips.

From the resultant corner kick the ball was cleared to Alex Harris and his volley was deflected into the path of Zoubir whose first time effort was turned round the post.

A few minutes later, Stanton received the ball on the edge of the area before turning and sending a fierce drive goalwards, but Forster produced a world class save to deny the youngster.

Collins then went close with an angled shot which flew inches past the post as Hibs pressed for an deserved equaliser.

With 15 minutes remaining, Celtic added a second in

controversial circumstances. Substitute Pukki flicked the ball past Nelson however it struck his hand from point blank range. There appeared little that he could have done to avoid the contact, but despite this, the referee awarded the foul and to add insult to injury booked the Hibs' defender.

Van Dijk took the free kick and sent in thunderous drive from 25 yards which flew into the corner of the net leaving Williams helpless.

The supporters were not the only ones upset with the referee's decision, and play was stopped whilst the official spoke to Terry Butcher, sparking a chorus of 'Argentina' and 'Diego Maradona' from the Celtic fans.

With Hibs desperately trying to get back into the game, Celtic added two more goals in the closing stages.

Williams should have done better with a well struck Pukki effort before Commons grabbed his second from the penalty spot after a rash challenge on Pukki by Alan Maybury.

After the game, an angry Terry Butcher described the decision to penalise Michael Nelson as 'bizarre' but said that he could not give his opinion on Thomson's 'performance' as this would get him into trouble with the authorities.

Supporters however not under the jurisdiction of the SFA took to twitter to express their disgust at the referee with many demanding that he is not appointed to any future games.

Hibs: Williams, Nelson, Harris, Craig, Collins, Stevenson, Maybury, Taiwo (Heffernan 81'), Forster, Stanton, Zoubir. Substitutes not used: Murdoch, Vine, Cairney, Handling, Horribine, Cummings.

Celtic: Forster, Izzaguirre, Ambrose, van Dijk, Biton (Pukki 46'), Brown, Samaras (Balde 84'), Commons, Ledley, Mulgrew (Johansen 86'), Fisher. Substitutes not used: Zaluska,

Boerrigter, O'Connell, Henderson.

Referee: Craig Thomson.

Attendance: 12,542.

Photo by John Preece

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