

James Collins determined to end Celtic's unbeaten run



On form striker James Collins is confident that Hibs have the capability to end Celtic's unbeaten run this weekend, provided the players don't start in the same manner that they did last Saturday against St Mirren at Easter Road when they lost three goals in the opening half.

Speaking at the weekly press conference at the Club's Training Centre, Collins said: "We fully know now what we need to do and we need to start a lot better than we did against St Mirren. I think if we start like that again on Sunday it will only end in disaster. It will definitely be on the boys' minds about starting off well and getting right at them from the first whistle.

"The gaffer told us where we were going wrong and deservedly so because we were awful, but he has his way and we responded to that in the second half, coming out and nearly getting the equaliser, so I think we can take some positives from that as well. I don't know why that happened. Maybe we thought it was a game we were expected to win and we went out thinking it was going to happen. We know we can't go out thinking like that on Sunday or else we'll end up with the same outcome.

"I think we just go about our game the way we were before St Mirren, we need to work hard and try and stop them playing. Our record at Easter Road has been good recently so hopefully we can keep that going on Sunday. I think any team that hasn't conceded in nine games is doing very well but they might get complacent and think it is just going to happen, but we'll be trying to make up for last week in front of a good crowd and I think the boys will be raring to go. If they are complacent we

need to be ready to take advantage.

“As a striker you need to be on the end of some good service and if that’s the case on Sunday we can stop their run. Even at Celtic Park we were unlucky not to get anything out of the game. We hit the post and even after they scored I didn’t think they created much. We drew 1-1 with them here when James Forrest scored for them late on, so I think they’ll be wary of us on Sunday – and so they should be.

“Personally I don’t think they are that far ahead of everyone else. They are a strong side with the biggest budget and you’d have thought better players as well. They have a great manager and a great stadium and they’re a massive club. If they can go through the season unbeaten they’ll be doing well – but I think they are going to have to work very hard for that on Sunday if they want to continue that run. Van Dijk and Ambrose are strong but you can always get chances off them because they do tend to have it quite easy. I think if you can get about them and after them they’ll give you a chance. You just have to be ready to take it.

“One thing is for sure, the gaffer will want us to go out and work hard and get in their faces, so that won’t change from the first game but the formation might be a little different, but whatever formation we play and whoever plays we need to make sure we get in about them. You need to do that against any side, and especially against Celtic.

The last time Celtic visited Easter Road, manager Neil Lennon complained about the Hibs’ tactics, describing some of the tackles as ‘shocking’ and ‘rugbyesque’ but Collins disagrees with his assessment of that game. He continued: “Neil Lennon was quite a tough player when he played as well. I think maybe he was trying to protect his team with his comments after that game. I don’t think there were any rash challenges, I just think it was a competitive game and there were a two competitive teams who wanted to win. That’s what the game is

all about and I think it will be the same on Sunday.

Collins appears to have finally found his goalscoring form after a summer move from Swindon Town, with a goal in the Edinburgh derby and a double last week against the Buddies although he would gladly have given up his goals for three points. He said: "When you score goals it always gives you confidence. The circumstances last Saturday weren't great but scoring a couple of goals is always good from a personal point of view, but I'd have much rather won the game and maybe crept into the top six. It wasn't to be but hopefully I can do the same on Sunday.

With Terry Butcher in the market for a striker, Collins does not see that as a threat to his starting place. He continued: "The gaffer has come out and said he wants attacking players and strikers, but that doesn't mean that they're going to come in and play. I just need to keep my head down and work hard and keep doing what I have been doing. If I am scoring goals then hopefully I can stay in the side, but it all comes down to if you are playing well and if the side is doing well, so hopefully I can stay in the team and keep it going."

Photo by John Preece

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