

# Liam Craig double not enough to secure Tannadice victory



A Liam Craig double either side of the break looked to have secured Hibs a fine victory at Tannadice today, but late goals from David Goodwillie and Brian Graham gave the Tangerines a share of the spoils to keep the gap between the teams at five points.

Hibs dominated throughout and although disappointed in not winning the game, they have the consolation of increasing their lead over St Johnstone on the top six.

Terry Butcher made one change to the starting XI who beat Hearts in the New Year's Edinburgh derby with Paul Heffernan returning to the side at the expense of youngster Jason Cummings, who dropped to the bench. Former Dundee United star Scott Robertson recovered from cramp to retain his place.

Heffernan had an early chance following good work by Lewis Stevenson, but as he was about to shoot, he appeared to have his standing foot taken from under him by Paul Paton, however referee Steven McLean quickly waved play on.

James Collins then went close with a powerful header from a Liam Craig corner, but ex Hibs' midfielder John Rankin cleared off the line.

Another Craig corner was met by Michael Nelson but his goal-bound effort was tipped over by Radosław Cierzniaak.

Hibs then had another penalty appeal denied when Jordon Forster appeared to be bundled over inside the box but once again the referee waved play on.

A minute later, the Easter Road side took a deserved lead when

Heffernan latched onto a poor ball from John Souttar to Mark Wilson and released Craig through on goal.

The skipper held his nerve and hammered an unstoppable drive into the far corner of the net to the delight of the large travelling support.

Dundee United replaced Ciftci and Wilson at half time, but Hibs continued to dominate and Heffernan went close before Souttar fouled Collins inside the area.

This time the referee awarded the spot kick and Craig stepped forward to repeat his derby heroics by sending the goalkeeper the wrong way and slotting it into the opposite corner.

United fought back both Brian Graham and Souttar had efforts which flew over the bar before Ben Williams produced a sensational acrobatic stop to prevent Paul Hanlon putting through his own goal.

With eight minutes remaining, substitute David Goodwillie pulled one back with a calm finish from a Graham cut back then in the dying minutes, the on loan Blackburn striker's powerful shot was deflected in by Graham to secure a point for United.

The result maintains the five point gap between the clubs in the Scottish Premiership with Hibs in sixth place.

Despite losing the lead, Terry Butcher refused to criticise his players. After the game he told BBC Scotland: "We've come to a team that are five points ahead of us. They've had a wonderful season yet we have more than matched them so it just shows you how far we've come. You could see tired legs out there and you have to give Dundee United credit. They got two goals for their efforts."

"For 70-75 minutes I thought we dominated the game. We were by far the team that was going to get the next goal at 2-0 up,

but we just couldn't quite get that third goal.

"They made some substitutions, pushed men forward and went for it. We failed to deal with a couple of long balls and a couple of crosses and we paid the price by not getting all three points. We are disappointed but we are still making steps forward and we are still progressing our unbeaten run.

"We made ground on St Johnstone, edged away from them a little bit, so it's not all doom and gloom. The players' heads are down but I said 'look, it's part of our experience and we can feel proud of the way we played'.

"To concede two goals in the manner we did is most unlike us and a wake-up call to work even harder in the last 20 minutes."

"Dundee United had 24 hours' extra recovery than we had after the Edinburgh derby, I was always worried about today's game because after a derby win sometimes you don't do well in the next game, but I was pleased with the way we played and we looked tight."

Dundee United: Cierzniak, Wilson (Dillon 46'), Souttar, Gunning, Robertson, Paton, Rankin, Mackay-Steven, Armstrong, Gauld (Goodwillie 58'), Ciftci (Graham 40'). Substitutes not used: McCallum, Butcher, Erskine, Dow.

Hibs: Williams, McGivern, Hanlon, Nelson, Robertson, Craig, Cairney (Stanton 75'), Collins, Stevenson, Forster, Heffernan (Tudur Jones 83'). Substitutes not used: Murdoch, Maybury, Handling, Zoubir, Cummings.

Referee: Steven McLean.

Attendance: 7,862.

Photo by John Preece

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