

Rangers 2-0 Hibernian: Under 20s suffer narrow defeat



A Luca Gasparotto header and a stunning strike from Darren Ramsey was enough to enable Rangers to leapfrog Hibs into top spot in the SPFL table in a hard fought encounter last night.

The game had been due to take place at the Energy Assets Arena in Livingston but was moved to Murray Park after an afternoon pitch inspection.

Hibs fielded an experienced side with Sean Murdoch, Rowan Vine, Jason Cummings, Danny Handling and Dean Horribine in the starting line-up.

Rangers took the lead in the 13th minute against the run of play when centre half Gasparotto headed home from a corner.

Ryan Baptie and Tom Gardiner went close for Hibs before the break then Horribine and Euan Smith went close with a shot from inside the box and a header respectively in the second half.

Rangers however grew in confidence and it took some stout defending from Hibs to stay in the game with Gasparotto looking dangerous.

With the game in the balance, it was Rangers who secured the victory with six minutes remaining when Ramsay fired in a spectacular style as his strike from 35 yards which cannoned in off the bar and past Sean Murdoch.

The result knocked the Hibs under-20s off the top of the table and into third spot; ended a sequence of five straight victories in the SPFL U20 League.

After the game, Head of Academy Coaching James McDonough told Hibernian TV: "I didn't think we did well enough; I think Rangers deserved their victory and I was a bit disappointed, to be honest.

"In the first half, we held our own – we had a lot of forward play, crosses into the box, corners and they were good deliveries too, but we went in at half-time 1-0 down because somebody doesn't do their job at a corner kick. Rangers scored from their first corner with a header and that makes a lot of your game plan go out of the window."

"The second half was a lot worse; we never got going and we backed off them. We weren't strong enough in the middle of the pitch whenever we got on the ball and we never got the ball back when we lost it.

"There were so many things that we didn't do properly and we never got it forward well enough and whenever it did get there we never looked after it. It was disappointing."

"Ramsey has picked the ball up after us being careless with it in the middle of the pitch and then he's hit it quick from 35 yards out and the goal finished the game off.

"A set-piece and a 35 yarder is what undid us and I think if we had just shown a wee bit more heart and belief we probably would have got something out of the game."

"The table doesn't really bother us. I still maintain that developing players is our job – the focus is on dealing with the development of the players.

"Their development from here is based on: 'how do you react to the weaknesses that you have showed in that game?' and 'how can you improve your game?' and that's what we'll try to do from tomorrow."

Former Hibs star Gordon Durie who now looks after the Rangers

Under 20s told www.rangers.co.uk

He said: "That was probably the best I've seen from Darren and we know he's got that ability in him. He was excellent.

"To be fair to him, he has been working really hard over the last couple of months to get his fitness levels up.

"His goal capped off a really good performance from him and that's what he's got to show week in, week out.

"It's going to be hard for the boys to get back into the team and we're looking for good competition for places.

"It was a wonderful strike from Darren, He's got these new white boots and I don't know where he's got them from but he can keep them.

"He spotted the goalie off his line from 25 or 30 yards out and he thoroughly deserves the goal he scored."

Hibernian under-20s: Sean Murdoch, Andrew Black, Ryan Baptie, Dean Horribine, Bob Wilson, Tom Gardiner, Euan Smith, Jamie Beaton, Jason Cummings, Danny Handling, Rowan Vine (Max Todd, 33). Unused substitutes: Kleton Perntreou, Aaron Dunsmore, Neil Martyniuk, Gareth McCaffrey, Scott Martin, Jay Doyle.