

Football – Hibernian 2-3 Raith Rovers: Scottish Cup woe for lacklustre Hibs



Hibs twice came back from behind in a hard-fought Scottish Cup tie against Raith Rovers, but couldn't make it third time lucky as the Fife side went on to progress to the quarter-finals.

The home side got off to a horror start as Raith's Kevin Moon snatched a goal after only five minutes. Joe Cardle found it easy to skip past his marker and pick out his man, who calmly slotted home to send the Championship side into an early lead.

To Hibs' credit, the players didn't allow their heads to drop and instead looked to put pressure on Raith and search for an equaliser. Teenager Sam Stanton was in good form, but it was new signing Duncan Watmore, on loan from Sunderland, that really began to cause problems for the opposition's defence. The diminutive winger was direct and pacey, skipping past one player and then another with ease. His attacking play was rewarded early in the first half when he drew Callum Booth – on loan at Raith from Hibs – into a foul at the edge of the box, winning himself a free-kick and earning Booth a yellow card.

The attempt from the resulting free-kick was blocked, earning Hibs a corner. When the ball broke to Stanton, the young midfielder made space for himself and unleashed a left-footed shot into the back of the net after thirteen minutes. The goal was Stanton's first for the club, and comes 37 years after the last Stanton scored for Hibs – Easter Road legend Pat.

Raith could have gone ahead again when a mix-up in defence

gave Ross Callachan the chance to send a powerful shot towards goal, but it came thundering off the woodwork before Hibs were able to clear. Up the other end, Watmore continued with his trickery, offering Hibs a different dimension to their play as the 19-year-old ran at defenders. Greig Spence was the second Raith player to find himself booked as a result of bringing down Watmore.

A clash of heads between Jordon Forster and Reece Donaldson saw the Raith player come off worse, and he had to be stretchered off the pitch, replaced by former Hibs player Fraser Mullen.

Raith took the lead again just before half time in controversial circumstances. The linesman had raised his flag for offside before Raith player Dougie Hill latched onto a ball, smashing it high into the net of Hibs' keeper Ben Williams. Despite furious cries from the Hibs fans, the referee overruled the linesman's decision and allowed the goal to stand.

Despite, or perhaps because of, losing a goal in such circumstances, Hibs immediately went back on the attack. Five minutes of injury time were added on due to the lengthy delay at the head injury to Donaldson, but Hibs only needed one for their second equaliser of the game. A corner from Liam Craig saw Michael Nelson demonstrate his power in the air, the centre-half nodding the ball into the back of the net to send both teams in at half time on equal terms.

Raith started the second half much brighter, and took the game to the home side. A double substitution for Hibs saw manager Terry Butcher replace James Collins and Alex Harris with Abdellah Zoubir and Notts County loan signing Danny Haynes in a bid to regain some control on the game. Only a few minutes later, Raith managed to put a spanner in the works by scoring a third goal. Cardle racked up his second assist of the game with a cross which met Grant Anderson, whose backwards header

saw goalkeeper Williams flailing in an attempt to keep it out.

Watmore claimed Liam Fox as his third booking of the day when the Raith man brought down the speedy winger to prevent a break. Despite Watmore's liveliness, however, he couldn't conjure up that third goal that Hibs so desperately needed, and the clock was beginning to run down.

Paul Heffernan was brought on to replace Tom Taiwo in an effort to look for another equaliser, but the striker blew his best chance when he shot into the arms of the goalkeeper after being put through by Craig.

In the end, visitors Raith will feel they deserved their win, and will find out their quarter-final opponents in Sunday's draw.

Hibs manager Terry Butcher was angry at the performances of his players.

"I'm bitterly disappointed because we didn't deserve anything from our performance today, so fair play to Raith Rovers and I want to congratulate them for their display," he said. "They rubbished us at the back, they won second balls, they passed it well and stopped us from gaining any sort of momentum.

"I just can't believe we've turned in a display like that. We worked so hard through the week to try and win the game. It's unbelievable.

"We showed a bit of character to get back twice and you're thinking let us score the next one and we'll see if they can come back, but second half they seemed to get a grip. We couldn't get anything going; we couldn't get the wide players on the ball."

The only silver lining that Butcher could take from the game were the performances of two of his youngest players.

"I felt sorry for Duncan Watmore and Sam Stanton. I thought

those two were great but the rest were very poor," he said. "We conceded three unbelievably poor goals which were disasters from our point of view. There's a lot of work to be done so what team I put out next week is anybody's guess because every position is up for grabs and I mean up for grabs.

"With the history that Hibs has with the Scottish Cup, we've let the fans down badly today."

Hibs: Williams, Forster, Nelson, Hanlon, Stevenson, Watmore, Taiwo (Heffernan 71), Craig, Harris (Haynes 60), Stanton, Collins (Zoubir 60)

Substitutes not used: Grant, Robertson, Boateng, Maybury

Raith Rovers: Laidlaw, Thomson, Hill (Ellis 73), Donaldson (Mullen 42), Booth, Anderson, Callachan, Fox, Moon, Cardle, Spence (Smith 64)

Substitutes not used: Roberts, Vaughan, Matthews, Bates

Referee: Steven McLean.