

Hibernian 1-3 Dundee United: Top six aim suffers setback



Hibs' hopes of making the top six took a knock tonight and once again some questionable refereeing decisions sparked fury amongst the supporters although few would argue that Dundee United fully deserved the three points at Easter Road.

In fact the 3-1 scoreline flattered Hibs as United missed two penalty kicks and a number of good chances in a game that they dominated throughout.

Earlier in the day, the club announced their season ticket package for the next campaign however the performance against Jackie McNamara's side is unlikely to persuade any undecided fans to part with their money.

Manager Terry Butcher made one change from the side that drew at Rugby Park last weekend with skipper Liam Craig restored to the starting line-up at the expense of youngster Daniel Handling, freeing Sam Stanton to play a more forward role.

Hibs started brightly and were almost gifted a goal when Cierzniak made a mess of punching clear Alex Harris corner kick and the ball against Paul Hanlon but flew past the post.

In the 21st minute, United were awarded a controversial penalty kick after Ryan Dow collided with Hanlon outside of the penalty area.

After consulting his linesman referee Euan Norris infuriated the Hibs supporters by pointing to the spot. Ryan McGivern was booked for arguing with the officials, but justice was done when Ciftci's side footed effort was comfortably saved by Ben Williams.

The Hibs' keeper was called into action again when he produced an acrobatic save from a Ciftci header before United took the lead in the 42nd minute.

Ciftci outmuscled Paul Hanlon inside the box then sidestepped past Michael Nelson before slotting the ball past Williams.

Just before the break, Hibs grabbed an equaliser when Cierzniak made a mess of punching clear Harris' corner kick and Jordon Forster headed the ball into the empty net.

Ten minutes into the second half, the Arabs regained the lead when Gavin Gunning out jumped Nelson to head the ball into net from Mackay-Steven's corner.

Three minutes later the visitors were awarded their second spot kick of the evening when Nelson brought down Gunning inside the box.

Mackay-Steven took responsibility but blasted the ball high over the crossbar.

Hanlon then had to leave the field after suffering double vision following a knock and with 18 minutes remaining, Hibs' chances deteriorated when Tom Taiwo was shown a second yellow card following a mistimed tackle.

Dundee United substitute El Alagul added a third when he beat Daniel Boateng to the ball and swept Andrew Robertson's low cross in at the near post.

Sam Stanton struck the outside junction of post and bar with a well taken free kick near the end but United easily held on to secure all three points.

Hibs: Williams, McGivern, Hanlon (Boateng 69'), Nelson, Harris, Craig (Handling 60'), Stevenson, Taiwo, Forster, Stanton, Haynes (Collins 79'). Substitutes not used: Murdoch, Cairney, Maybury, Cummings.

Dundee United: Cierzniak, Watson, Good, Gunning, Paton, Rankin, Dow, Robertson, Armstrong (El Alagui 79'), Mackay-Stephen (Gomis 89'), Ciftci (Graham 79'). Substitutes not used: McCallum, Wilson, Dillon, Connolly.

Referee: Euan Norris.

Photo by John Preece

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