

Heart of Midlothian 2 Hibernian 0



The fourth Edinburgh derby of the season had been billed, particularly from those from the east of the city, as the game which would finally seal Hearts fate and consign the Gorgie boys to their fate of Championship football next season. A rare win for Hibernian at Tynecastle would mean Hearts would be unable to catch 11th placed St. Mirren and would face the prospect of slugging it out for promotion back to the top flight of Scottish football with the likes of Rangers when the new season starts in August.

However, Gary Locke's young side didn't read the script and recorded their third win over Hibernian this season, two wins being in the league, the other at Easter Road in the League Cup. Hibernian had sold out their allocation of tickets for the game but for those bedecked in green and white who arrived in Gorgie wearing party hats and streamers, the occasion was as akin to turning up at a New Year Party – in the middle of January. Indeed, given Terry Butcher's side's freefall in recent weeks, there may well be another 'relegation party' between these two teams in a few weeks at Easter Road – one can't rule out the possibility the Hibeas may be accompanying their great rivals in the Championship next season if they slip further down the league and are involved in the dreaded play-offs.

Both sides may have had hugely disappointing seasons and the kick-off may have been the hardly traditional Sunday lunch time but the atmosphere at Tynecastle was as frenetic as ever on Edinburgh derby day. This was fuelled early on by a wreckless challenge from Hibs Lewis Stevenson which caught the chest of Hearts striker Callum Paterson. The young forward was

uninjured, though, and after just seven minutes, he crossed from the right towards Ryan Stevenson. The former Ayr United and Ipswich Town player headed the ball into the path of Dale Carrick who did well to control the ball before firing past Hibs keeper Williams. 1-0 to the home side to the obvious delight of the home support who once again turned up in numbers.

Hibs looked momentarily stunned by this turn of events but eventually began to claw their way back into the game. Danny Handling was given too much space on the edge of the Hearts penalty box but his effort on goal sailed over the crossbar. Soon afterwards, Hibs were awarded a free-kick on the edge of the Hearts penalty box but Sam Stanton's effort was well wide of goal. The best chance for the visitors, though, fell to £200,000 striker James Collins who was set up by Watmore. However, from 12 yards out, Collins fired his shot high into the stand, much to the frustration of the visiting support for whom the party was turning decidedly miserable.

Hearts also had chances to double their lead and Sam Nicholson's fierce shot was saved well by Williams. Hearts almost began the second half the way they began the first and fine play from Dale Carrick set up David Smith whose effort whistle past the post of Williams.

Hibs then claimed loudly for handball when Hearts Australian defender Dylan McGowan blocked Collins' shot on the edge of the penalty box but to no avail before Ryan McGivern's two attempts on goal were more in hope than expectation.

Towards the end of the game, it appeared Hibernian had snatched the equaliser. Stevenson's cross was headed by Forster past Hearts keeper Jamie MacDonald into the net but the visiting support's raptures were soon doused by the appearance of the assistant referee raising his flag for offside. Television replays showed this to be an incorrect decision by some distance as the Hibs man was clearly onside. The fury felt by the Hibs fans was shared by manager Terry

Butcher and some of the Hibs players, particularly Alan Maybury who took his frustration out on Hearts substitute Billy King by tripping the Hearts youngster. A second yellow card was shown to the former Hearts favourite meaning the visitors were reduced to ten men.

Given Hearts surrendered a 2-1 lead to nine men in the League Cup semi-final defeat to Inverness Caledonian Thistle a few weeks ago, few of the Hearts support were taking anything for granted. However, in stoppage time with Hibs pressing for the equaliser, Hearts broke away. The experienced Ryan Stevenson timed his pass to Billy King to perfection and the youngster kept his cool before rounding Hibs keeper Williams to end the scoring at 2-0 to Hearts.

Afterwards, jubilant Hearts manager Gary Locke said "It's probably too little, too late but the players have shown they're improving and hopefully we've got a strong future. Our wide men and Dale Carrick up front caused them quite a lot of problems. The whole team played very, very well. It was a great game and Hibs added to that by having a right go in the second half. It was end to end and I was obviously delighted to see young Billy King score at the end."

For Hibernian, it was yet another disappointing outcome to an Edinburgh derby. Manager Terry Butcher could not contain his anger at the assistant referee's decision to rule out Jordon Forster's headed goal.

"It's scandalous, it really is," said the former England captain. "It's a horrendous call from the linesman. He can see right along the line of grass. He can spot the player who was playing Jordon Forster on. The players worked very hard, the system was good and they applied themselves but we've lost the game and it's hard to take. We've left the players in no uncertain terms that we need to get going now. We have six games left and we have to get points and I am confident that we can do that. Every club in the bottom half is in a dog

fight. We need to pull our fingers out and work harder.”

Hearts relegation fate may well be confirmed when high-flying Aberdeen visit Gorgie on Wednesday but Sunday’s victory was at least a last hurrah for their beleaguered but magnificently loyal supporters who are making no secret of the fact they hope their city rivals will still be with them next season.

For Hibernian, the loss of form at a crucial time of the season is a worry. They are six points clear of a play-off place in the league and the lack of games left suggests they should be okay. But their failure to defeat Hearts yet again means one can’t really be confident Terry Butcher’s side will beat anyone else this season. The Easter Road fans will be hoping St. Mirren and Partick Thistle don’t suddenly discover form as the nerve-jangling prospect of a play-off is hardly one to look forward to.

Hearts: MacDonald; Paterson, McGowan, Wilson, McHattie; Hamill, Holt, R. Stevenson; Smith, Carrick, Nicholson.

Hibs: Williams, McGivern, Nelson, Collins, L. Stevenson, Maybury, Handling, Taiwo, Watmore, Forster, Stanton.

Referee: Steven McLean

Att: 16,873

Top man: Danny Wilson – immense in the Hearts defence.