

Partick Thistle 3-1 Hibernian



With three games to go before the split, Hibs' hopes of securing a top six finish hang by a thread after losing 3-1 to Partick Thistle at Firhill yesterday.

Terry Butcher made one change to the Hibs' line-up following their midweek draw with Inverness with Jason Cummings replacing Danny Haynes in attack.

Ryan McGivern tripped Lyle Taylor on the edge of the penalty area in the first minute and Ben Williams easily saved Kallum Higginbotham's free kick.

At the other end Paul Gallacher did well to prevent Cummings turning in a dangerous cross from former Thistle man Paul Cairney.

Cummings then had the chance to release the unmarked James Collins but Conrad Balatoni managed to block his pass before Duncan Watmore managed to get behind the Thistle defence on the left but no-one was able to capitalise on his cutback.

Hibs dominated possession and won a series of corner kicks without looking dangerous whilst Thistle and in particular Higginbotham were causing problems on the break and Ben Williams did well to push his effort over the crossbar.

Higginbotham then missed an opportunity before setting up Erskine but Williams stood tall and easily saved his shot.

The Hibs' number one then had to react quickly to smoother at the feet of Kris Doolan before Thistle's pressure paid off just before the break when Erskine blasted high into the net after good work from Taylor and Doolan.

Hibs started the second half brightly with Cummings forcing

Gallacher into an early save and then from Sam Stanton's corner kick Michael Nelson rose above the defence but his header slew just over the bar.

Williams produced another fine save to deny Higginbotham before the Jags added a second when Mair headed in Higginbotham's inch perfect free kick at the back post.

Hibs responded immediately as Stanton surged forward finding Watmore who curled a terrific finish low into the bottom left hand corner of the net.

Taylor was then denied by Williams at his near post then before narrowly missing Higginbotham's low cross after sliding in as Thistle looked to wrap the game up.

Hibs put the home defence under pressure late on with Hanlon, Haynes and Forster all going close then with eight minutes remaining a driven cross from substitute Heffernan was almost turned into his own net by O'Donnell but an instinctive stop from Gallacher prevented an equaliser.

In time added on, and with Hibs pushing bodies forward Higginbotham secured the points with a breakaway goal.

Afterwards Terry Butcher told Sky Sports: "I think Hibs fans have seen this performance so many times. Performances like that have happened all too often for Hibs in the past.

"It will be an interesting team selection next week. I'd rather go with kids and lose if we're going to lose, but let's go with kids, at least they're honest.

"Today Watmore and Sam Stanton were excellent for us and they tried their socks off, and they are being let down by other players.

"We pushed Sam out wide left to have a go at the full-back and he got into a good position for the goal, but I need three or four Sam Stantons in the team and I haven't got that.

“I need three or four Duncan Watmores in the team and I haven’t got that.

“They’re game boys and if you look for any comfort from the game – and there’s not much – those two would provide it between themselves, so it will be interesting next week.

“We’ll certainly have a look at team selection because we’ve got eight battles now. I don’t like being let down. I do not like being let down.”

St Johnstone list to Ross County in the tea time fixture at Perth, but still remain four points clear with a game in hand and a vastly superior goal difference.

Partick Thistle: Gallacher, O’Donnell, Taylor-Sinclair, Balatoni, Doolan, Buaben, Mair, Taylor (Elliott 78’), Fraser, Higginbotham, Erskine (Lawless 84).Substitutes not used: Fox, Craigen, Piccolo, McMillan, Moncur.

Hibs: Williams, McGivern, Hanlon, Nelson, Cairney (Craig 65’), Collins (Haynes 76’), Taiwo, Watmore, Forster, Stanton, Cummings (Heffernan 61’).Substitutes not used: Murdoch, Stevenson, Maybury, Handling.

Referee: Brian Colvin.

Attendance: 4,414

Photograph by John Preece

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