

Sam Stanton named SPFL Young Player of the Month for February.



Hibs' teenage midfielder Sam Stanton has been named SPFL Young Player of the Month for February.

The youngster was presented with the trophy at the club's training centre at East Mains yesterday as he prepared for this afternoon's clash with Partick Thistle at Firhill.

Stanton said: "It caps off a really good month for me. Everything seems to have happened very quickly.

"Just to be playing at first and then get the goals I have got, and then the Scotland under-21s appearance and now this. It's great.

"It was obviously an honour to play for Scotland and hopefully I can do to more often. I know I have set a high standard for myself but hopefully I can keep it going. This is just the start of things to come."

Stanton made his debut as a substitute against Rangers on 28 January 2012 under Pat Fenlon but suffered a serious injury whilst on loan with Cowdenbeath forcing him to wait almost two years before making his first start against Celtic at Easter Road.

His performance that day earned plaudits and he has been an ever present since then. He continued: "My patience has paid off. It has felt like a long couple of years at times before I got my chance. Thankfully it has come now and I have taken it. It's been two years since I played my first ever game. I went on loan to Cowdenbeath to play football but that got cut short

and I was out for five months injured. I had keyhole surgery on my knee so it has felt like a long time. But it has paid off now.

“There are always times when you wonder if you will get the chance or not. I don’t think I ever doubted my ability but you are never sure what managers might think of you or whether you will get a chance. I still think I have a lot to learn and improve on before I can consider myself a regular so I’ll keep working away and do as well as I can in training and games.”

His form caught the eye of Scotland Under 21 manager Billy Stark and he made his debut in the dark blue against Hungary causing some micky taking in the dressing room: “The boys haven’t said anything about the award because I don’t think they know yet, but I am sure they will. They have already been winding me up about my Scotland call-up saying I’m big time now! I can’t do anything without them saying something. But it’s all been a good laugh.

“I have been getting a wee bit of stick now and then but the boys have all been very good with me, they’ve been very supportive. I don’t think it was difficult to come in when I did. I think if you are good enough to play it doesn’t matter about your age. You should be good enough to go in under any circumstances and be able to play. It would be nice if we were winning more games, that’s the aim for myself and the team. It’s good. I like being in the thick of things. That’s where I want to be. I want to help drive the team forward as much as I can. I don’t think age should make a difference to what you bring to a game.

“Liam (Craig) has been great, he gives me a lot of advice and he has been a big help. He is never bad towards me in any way. It’s great the manager has shown that sort of faith in me. It has given me the confidence to go out and play and keep doing what I have been. I would swap it for a place in the top six, definitely. We have three games coming up we are capable of

winning so we have to try and win them. What St Johnstone do is out of our hands with the exception of when we play them, but we'll see."

Stanton's form has been one of the pluses for Terry Butcher since he took over at Easter Road and he was clearly delighted with the youngster's recognition. He said: "I'm absolutely thrilled for him. He is from a long line of excellent Hibs youngsters and, if you look at the players who have left this club that had good seasons here and played a lot of football for the club, then I'm sure Sam will do exactly that. He's come a long way in the time we have been here. He has gone from not being in the squad, to being in the team, to the Scotland set-up and now he is picking up awards."

Photo by John Preece

<http://www.photoboxgallery.com/jlp-photography>