

Hibernian 1 Heart of Midlothian 2



Much has been written about Hearts 15 point deduction in the SPFL Premiership and the embargo on signing new players meaning relegation was likely from the start of the season. This was confirmed a couple of weeks ago and Hearts will play next season in the Championship. However, Hibernian's astonishing dip in form since the start of the year has opened up the possibility of the Easter Road club joining their Edinburgh rivals in football's second flight next season, a possibility enhanced by Hearts recording their third league win of the season over Hibs – and their fourth in total if you include the League Cup win at the same venue. While Hearts will remain at the foot of the league until the season's end, 11th place in the league will mean a nervy two-legged play-off against a Championship team for the right to play in the Premiership next season – and Hibernian are slipping closer to this spot with every passing week.

Two goals in four minutes towards the end of the first half from Callum Paterson put Hearts on their way to victory and although Hibs Jordon Forster pulled one back in the second half, it was too little too late for Terry Butcher's side.

The game was preceded by a minute's applause in recognition of two icons of the 1970s and 80s with Edinburgh connections. Politician Margo MacDonald – a passionate supporter of Hibernian – passed away at the beginning of the month while Hearts legend Sandy Jardine who, with Alex MacDonald was responsible for the rebirth of Hearts in the early 1980s, died on Thursday.

However, it has to be said the game itself couldn't match the

class of those two individuals. Misplaced passes, crunching tackles and aimless long punts seemed to be the order of the day – sadly, an all too common feature of recent Edinburgh derbies. Hibs Kevin Thomson had the only effort on goal of note early on – but even this was wayward and rather aimless. Hearts seemed content to let Hibs come at them but the home side's nerves were there for all to see although good play from Sam Stanton delivered a cross into the Hearts penalty box only to find there was no one to accept his fine offer. Moments later, Hibs Jason Cummings headed Liam Craig's cross wide before the youngster tried a long-range effort which Hearts keeper Jamie MacDonald needed two attempts to gather.

Stanton was the one player who looked threatening although it has to be said the game could have been played without a ball and few people would have noticed. Just when it looked like the first half would be goalless, Hearts broke the deadlock eight minutes before half-time. A fine corner from Billy King found Callum Paterson and the utility player's downward header fell beyond the despairing Hibs keeper Ben Williams to give Hearts the lead – and secure Hearts 500th goal in the Edinburgh derby. It was Hearts first meaningful attempt on goal in the game.

Cue bedlam from the sold-out Hearts end while those Hibs fans who had made the effort to support their team collectively folded their arms and doubtless thought 'here we go again.' A feeling intensified just four minutes later when, following a free-kick expertly delivered by Kevin McHattie, Paterson rose high again to head home Hearts second goal. This was the signal for some of the home support to head for the exits as Hearts went in at the break two goals to the good.

Hibs manager Terry Butcher may well have used a few choice words at the interval as his charges looked at lot more determined in the early stages of the second half. Alex Harris' shot was deflected wide before Jordon Forster's header was cleared off the goalline. Kevin Thomson then had a chance

as Hearts seemed to retreat into a shell. However, Gary Locke's side did eventually move forward and McHattie rattled in a fierce long-range shot which was well saved by Williams. Liam Craig's free-kick then brought a fine save from the Hearts keeper and there certainly seemed more goalmouth action in the early stages of the second half than most of the first. With 20 minutes to go, the home side were given a lifeline when Kevin Thomson's free-kick caught out the Hearts defence allowing Ryan McGivern to cross to Jordon Forster who headed past MacDonald. 2-1 to the visitors and now it was very much game on.

Kevin Thomson then found substitute Duncan Watmore but the Hibs player was denied by Hearts Australian defender Dylan McGowan. With the home team piling on the pressure for what would be a crucial equaliser, the Hibs fans were ready to celebrate with just five minutes left. Hearts failed to clear the ball which fell into the path of James Collins. Sadly for Hibs, their £200,000 striker completely missed the ball and the chance was gone.

With six minutes of stoppage time added on it was Hearts who had the game's final chance but Ryan Stevenson's effort on goal went wide. Seconds later, the final whistle blew and Hearts supporters celebrated yet another win in the Edinburgh derby. For Hibernian, it was another bitter pill to swallow, particularly as their team now face a tension-laden final three games to avoid the dreaded relegation play-offs.

Hibs: Williams, McGivern, Nelson, Harris, Robertson, Craig, Maybury, Forster, Stanton, Cummings, Thomson.

Hearts: MacDonald; Paterson, McGowan, Wilson, McHattie; King, Robinson, Holt, Nicholson, Stevenson; Carrick

Referee: Bobby Madden

Att: 14,806

Top man: Hearts Jason Holt