

Hamilton Academical 0-2 Hibernian



Two sensational goals from Hibs' teenage striker Jason Cummings helped secure a valuable victory last night in the Play Offs first leg at New Douglas Park.

Hibs now go into Sunday's second leg in confident mood, knowing that barring a disaster they will be playing in the SPFL next season.

Terry Butcher made three changes to the Hibs starting XI with Alex Harris, Lewis Stevenson and Cummings replacing James Collins, Jordon Forster and Duncan Watmore.

Hibs almost grabbed an early opener when Scott Robertson's curling effort crashed off the post then Accies' Louis Longridge fired wide from a good position under pressure from Alan Maybury.

Hibs took the lead seven minutes before the break in spectacular fashion when Cummings pounced on a headed clearance from Jesus Garcia Tena who was under pressure from Paul Heffernan.

The youngster took time to control the ball before striking a sensational effort from 25 yards which left the keeper helpless.

Ben Williams then did well to prevent former Hibe Mickael Antoine-Curier from equalising following a mistake from Michael Nelson.

On 54 minutes Hibs doubled their lead when Paul Heffernan's driven low cross found from the left was touched on by Robertson into the path of Cummings who produced a stunning

finish to chip the ball over Cuthbert and despite an attempted clearance from Ziggy Gordon, the ball had clearly crossed the line.

Hibs looked to add a third and Sam Stanton went close with a long range shot.

Williams was forced into action in the latter stages, but Hibs held on to secure the victory to the delight of the large travelling support.

After the game a delighted Terry Butcher said: "We've got to go out [on Sunday] and be professional. We want to make the most of it and finish the job.

"It's horrible when you're on the sidelines watching it because there's so much at stake. It's only our second win in 20 matches and it feels really good in such an important match"

"Then Jason scores and we didn't know what to do. We're not used to coming in at half-time 1-0 up and we're not used to scoring two goals and keeping a clean sheet. The boys are in the dressing room and don't know what to do.

"But it's a lovely feeling and I'm not being blase about it. This is a situation that we wanted to be in and, credit to the players, because they came back after the Kilmarnock game and their attitude since then has been spot on.

"They've done remarkably well in terms of how they've bounced back. It's testament to them that, because they did that, it obviously showed tonight.

"It's only our second win in 20 matches and it feels really good in such an important match. We've kept a clean sheet, scored two goals and changed the shape of the team because Hamilton were beginning to dominate the midfield.

"Fair play to them, they're a good little side and have some

good players; they made it difficult for us, but we stopped the rot in the middle of the park, contained it and then thought 'we've got some pace, let's see if we can get behind them and score'.

"Jason took his second goal really well and his first goal was a dream. We've had absolutely no luck in the last two or three months to be honest and there was nothing lucky about our second goal.

"It was a great little dink, a calm finish from someone so young. Before, that would've been cleared off the line and nothing been given.

"It's nice when they do go in. We didn't play fluently but it was a gritty performance and a steely performance. You need that in these games, high pressure games.

"The players have always stayed firm, have been resolute and shown great character. They've believed, I've believed and I think that showed tonight.

"You treat it as 0-0 and get on with it. We're playing at Easter Road and it's going to be a bumper crowd and the fans will be there cheering us on, on a lovely surface as well.

"We want to make the most of it and enjoy the occasion and make sure we play well and finish the job."

Hamilton Academical: Cuthbert, Gordon, Canning, Gillespie, Keating (Ryan 52'), Routledge (Crawford 85'), Longridge (Scotland 73'), MacKinnon, Andreu, Tena, Antione-Curier. Substitutes not used: Currie, Devlin, Neil, Kilday.

Hibernian: Williams, McGivern, Nelson, Harris, Robertson (Tudur Jones 90'), Craig, Stevenson, Maybury, Heffernan, Stanton, Cummings (Cairney 85'). Substitutes not used: Murdoch, Collins, Forster, Haynes, Thomson.

Referee: Bobby Madden

Photo by John Preece

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