

Hibernian 1-1 Partick Thistle



A late Sam Stanton header gave Hibs' a share of the points against Partick Thistle at Easter Road today and ended a dismal run of six successive defeats whilst results elsewhere mean that a win on Tuesday night against Ross County will ensure top flight survival.

Before the game Hibs' Fit Fans ran an incredible 12.75 marathons around the pitch and their efforts seemed to inspire the players who fought for every ball in the hard fought yet entertaining game.

Thistle had led for most of the game after taking an early lead, but Hibs more than deserved their share of the points as only some sensational saves by Paul Gallacher prevented a comprehensive victory from the home side.

Terry Butcher made one change to the team that lost to Hearts last week with suspended Jordon Forster missing the game resulting in Ryan McGivern partnering Michael Nelson in the centre and Lewis Stevenson slotting in at left back. James McPake was named amongst the substitutes after playing two full under 20s games.

Hibs started brightly and Sam Stanton had a chance to set up Jason Cummings but his pass was intercepted by Gary Fraser.

Once again however the home side fell behind against the run of play when Kallum Higginbotham beat Alex Harris in the air and his header fell to James Craigen who slipped in Kris Doolan who beat Ben Williams and the ball ended up in the net despite the efforts of Stevenson on the line.

Stanton then went close with a free kick and Cummings almost

equalised with a header from a Harris cross.

Goal scorer Doolan was substituted after suffering a shoulder injury and was replaced by former Pat Fenlon target Lyle Taylor.

Hibs continued to press and skipper Liam Craig fired in a strike from the edge of the box which produced a stunning save from Gallacher.

In the 26th minute only a world class save from Gallacher denied Michael Nelson then Cummings headed the rebound onto the post before the Thistle defence scrambled the ball clear.

Two minutes later Harris found Nelson and his strong header produced yet another sensational save from Gallacher.

Just before the break, McGivern went close with a header and a Stanton shot was deflected narrowly past the post but with Hibs pressing the final chance of the half fell to Taylor but his strike was saved by Ben Williams and Stevenson cleared the rebound.

With two minutes gone in the second half, influential midfielder Kevin Thomson was forced to leave the field due to an injury and was replaced by James Collins.

Hibs' continued to dominate possession in the second half although Thistle looked dangerous on the break.

Scott Robertson found Stevenson on the left but his cross evaded all in the middle.

In the 79th minute Hibs were reduced to ten men after Nelson was shown a second yellow card after bringing down Taylor as he raced clear.

Gallacher then did well to save a Craig free kick then produced a brave save at the feet of substitute Collins, then

with two minutes remaining Hibs grabbed a deserved share of the points when Stanton bravely leapt in front of Gallacher to head home to the delight of the Easter Road faithful.

After the game Butcher told Hibernian TV: "It's a very valuable point. The boys could barely applaud the fans after the match because they were knackered; they had put so much into it.

"They showed a lot of character and a lot of guts to keep going. To be fair to Partick Thistle they are a good side and they break well.

"Higginbotham is a good player. They've got pace in abundance and they suck you in. We knew if we could get it up the other end we could score."

"You have to keep on believing and I thought today our luck was going to turn and it did.

"James Collins played a great part in the equaliser. He's headed it down well and Sam Stanton has put it away.

"James is the type of player who will keep at it and if you put balls in the box, he'll challenge for it. Cummings played well as well. He's learning on his feet so to speak but he's quick and he's strong and he's come onto a game."

Butcher reveals that Hibernian will be without two senior players, Kevin Thomson (thigh) and Nelson (suspension) for Tuesday's hugely important match at Ross County (6 May, kick off 7.45pm), but stresses the squad are fired up for the challenge.

He said: "If we win that match then we're safe. We'll be without Michael Nelson and Kevin Thomson has a thigh strain so we'll need to have a look at that.

"It's a fantastic challenge for us and a great game to look forward to and a chance to finish it off."

Hibernian: Williams, McGivern, Nelson, Harris (Watmore 61'), Robertson (Handling 83'), Craig, Stevenson, Maybury, Stanton, Cummings, Thomson (Collins 46'). Substitutes not used: Murdoch, McPake, Cairney, Tudur Jones.

Partick Thistle: Gallagher, Sinclair, Balatoni, Craigen, Bannigan, Doolan (Taylor 18'), Fraser, Mair (Piccolo 44'), McMillan, Higginbotham, Erskine (Elliott 73'). Substitutes not used: Fox, Lawless, Keenan, Moncur.

Referee: Alan Muir.

Attendance 10,740