

Hibs crash to three goal home defeat against Morton



Hibs hopes of overtaking Rangers to gain automatic promotion are hanging by a thread tonight after crashing to a 3-0 home defeat to Morton.

The game marked Lewis Stevenson's 300th game for the club joining such legends as Gordon Smith, Lawrie Reilly and Pat Stanton, and although he was made captain for the night, it's a game that he won't want to remember.

Head Coach Alan Stubbs made seven changes to the starting XI that beat Alloa Athletic on Sunday. David Gray, Stevenson, John McGinn, Darren McGregor, Anthony Stokes, Kevin Thomson and Jason Cummings all returned to team but surprisingly there was no place on the bench for either of the goal-scorers, Martin Boyle or Dan Carmichael.

Long term injury victim Farid El Alagui was listed amongst the substitutes.

Two familiar faces were in the away dug out, former manager Jim Duffy and substitute goalkeeper Andy McNeil who was a team mate of Stevenson when Hibs won the CIS League Cup in 2007.

Hibs started brightly and Stokes went close with a long range effort and a header which flew into the side netting.

Striking partner Cummings almost gave Hibs the lead in the 9th minute but his first time effort from a Liam Henderson corner took a deflection off a defender and ended up in the keeper's arms.

Derek Gaston then did well to save another Cummings header then Hibs' fans thought they had taken the lead in the 14th

minute when McGinn fired home from close range but the linesman's flag was raised against Cummings in the build up.

It seemed only a matter of time before Hibs scored then in the 26th minute Henderson slotted a through ball into the path of Gray. the full back calmly chipped the ball to Cummings but somehow his header flew wide with the goal gaping.

A goal did arrive a few minutes later but it was for Morton against the run of play. Ross Forbes sent in a dangerous corner and Thomas O'Ware headed the ball into the net from close range.

Just after the break, Cummings struck the crossbar and the ball rebounded into the path of Stokes who was clearly bundled to the ground by Lee Kilday in a challenge that would be more appropriate in the six nations. Incredibly referee Greg Aitken ignored the appeal then infuriated the supporters even more when Morton scored a second.

Both Stevenson and McGeough were fouled during the build up but the referee waved play on both times. Declan McManus then sent in a cross from the right which Oxley spilled into the path of Denny Johnstone who tapped the ball into the net from three yards.

Hibs continued to attack but Morton defended well and hit on the break and a third goal ended the game as a contest. With Hibs attacking, the ball was cleared to Bobby Barr who ran 50 yards into the penalty area before cutting the ball back to Ross Forbes who slotted the ball into the corner of the net leaving Oxley helpless.

Hibs had another penalty appeal ignored when substitute James Keatings was brought down by O'Ware although by that time the game was lost.

Morton almost added a fourth but McManus fired over from eight yards.

In the last few minutes Marvin Bartley forced a fine save from Gaston and Morton held on to secure the points.

The defeat is Hibs' first loss at home since last April and leaves them eight points behind Rangers in the race for the Championship.

After the game a disappointed Alan Stubbs said: "When you are on top you have to take your chances. We've given away two poor goals but all credit to Morton. When they had chances they took them and I've no complaints."

Hibs: Oxley, Gray, Fontaine, McGregor, Stevenson, Thomson, Henderson, McGeouch, McGinn, Stokes, Cummings. Subs: Virtanen, Hanlon, Bartley, El Alagui, Keatings, Gunnarsson, Dagnall

Morton: Gaston, Kilday, O'Ware, McKee, Forbes, Johnstone, Pepper, Barr, Russell, McManus, McMullan. Subs: McNeil, Lamie, McCluskey, Scullion, Quitongo, Tennant.

Referee Greg Aitken.

Attendance 8755