

Morton 0-1 Hibernian: Anthony Stokes' strike secures Hibs victory



A goal from Anthony Stokes just after half time was enough to secure a valuable three points for Hibs against Morton in Greenock tonight.

Head Coach Alan Stubbs made four changes to the starting XI that qualified for the Scottish League Cup Final by beating St Johnstone at Tynecastle on Saturday. Niklas Gunnarsson and Darren McGregor took over in defence from David Gray and Paul Hanlon whilst up front James Keatings and Stokes replaced Chris Dagnall and Jason Cummings. The four players who were replaced were all listed amongst the substitutes.

The Hibs players received a tremendous reception from the large travelling support who braved the wet and windy conditions, as they emerged from the tunnel wearing their purple away strip.

Hibs started brightly and Gunnarsson went close with a long range effort in the 5th minute, however five minutes later Fontaine limped off with an apparent hamstring injury and was replaced by Hanlon who took over as skipper.

In a scrappy first half both Stokes and Keatings had goal-bound efforts blocked but neither keeper was tested until the 40th minute when Derek Galston did well to tip over a point blank header from Keatings.

Morton had a chance from a free-kick just outside the area but Joe McKee's effort went well over the bar then just before half time Lewis Stevenson was booked for a challenge near the

corner flag.

Hibs took a deserved lead in the 47th minute when John McGinn picked up a slack ball and fed Stokes who cleverly wrong footed a defender before sliding the ball past Galston from 18 yards. The on-loan striker almost doubled Hibs advantage moments later after some good work by Keatings but his effort flew narrowly wide.

Hibs continued to dominate possession and Galston did well to save another long range effort from Stokes.

Liam Henderson then did well to surge into the penalty box and appeared to be pulled back as he was about to shoot however referee John McKendrick ignored the appeals.

With 15 minutes remaining Stokes was replaced by Dagnall and the Irishman left the field to a standing ovation from the travelling support.

McGinn had a shot blocked and Dylan McGeouch did well to prevent a Morton break away.

Henderson had a powerful right footed strike saved by Galston at the second attempt with Keating waiting to pounce then Gray replaced the tiring Gunnarsson in the 81st minute.

With time running out Henderson did well to surge forward but his shot was saved by Galston and Hibs were able to hold on for the victory.

Elsewhere Rangers beat Raith Rovers 1-0 at starks Park to remain eight points clear in the race for the Championship although Hibs have a game in hand.

Alan Stubbs' men now face Hearts at Tynecastle on Sunday in the fifth round of the William Hill Scottish Cup.

Morton: Galston, Kilday, O'Ware, McKee, Forbes, Johnstone, McCluskey, Pepper, Barr, Russell, McManus. Subs McGowan,

Lamie, Miller, Scullion, Tidster, Samuel, Quitongo

Hibernian: Oxley, Gunnarsson, McGregor, Fontaine, Stevenson,
Fyvie, McGinn, McGeouch, Henderson, Keatings, Stokes. Subs:
Virtanen, Gray, Hanlon, Thomson, Boyle, Dagnall, Cummings

Referee John McKendrick

Attendance 2696