

Raith Rovers 2-1 Hibernian – Hibs lose ground in Championship race



Despite going in front, Hibs succumbed to their fourth successive league defeat at Starks Park today which all but ends any hope of automatic promotion. The Easter Road side looked comfortable after Anthony Stokes opened the scoring but goals either side of half time by Lewis Toshney and Mark Stewart secured a valuable three points for Raith Rovers now Hibs face a battle with Falkirk for second place in the Championship.

Head Coach Alan Stubbs made one change to the starting XI that beat Inverness Caledonian Thistle in the William Hill Scottish Cup quarter final at the Tulloch Caledonian Stadium on Wednesday night with Martin Boyle replacing the suspended Liam Henderson. Mark Oxley who left the field after losing a contact lens retained his position in goal. There was no place in the squad for Fraser Fyvie who is returning from injury.

Hibs almost took an early lead when John McGinn found Boyle with a superb through ball, but Kevin Cuthbert produced a good save to deny the midfielder. Moments later Cuthbert was called into action again to save a long range strike from Jason Cummings as Hibs pushed forward in search of an opening goal.

In the 16th minute, Marvin Bartley was injured in a challenge with Iain Davidson but he was able to resume after treatment.

In the 23rd minute, David Gray sent in a dangerous cross from the right which Stokes met with a powerful header but Cuthbert was in the perfect position to hold the ball. Hibs then had a sustained spell of pressure which ended with a

deserved opening goal.

McGinn did well to beat two Raith Rovers defenders but his shot was deflected for a corner on the left. He took a short corner then sent a dangerous cross to Cummings at the back post but the ball was headed away for another corner, this time from the right. McGinn sent in an in-swinger which was headed clear by Rory McKeown into the path of Stokes who fired the ball into the net from 15 yards to score his third goal in two games.

Although Hibs continued to dominate possession, Rovers looked dangerous on the break and Oxley almost made a hash of dealing with a Callachan cross with Mark Stewart ready to pounce.

Raith's persistence eventually paid off in the 37th minute when the Hibs' defence failed to deal with a long ball from Craig Barr and Toshney got the break of the ball before sliding a low shot into the corner of the net from the edge of the penalty area.

Hibs almost regained the lead just before the break when James Keatings slipped an inch perfect pass into the path of Gray. The skipper cleverly cut the ball back to Stokes who looked certain to score but somehow Jason Thomson managed to deflect his close range shot over the bar.

In time added on Ryan Hardie broke clear and raced into the penalty box but he was unable to find the space to get his shot away and the ball was cleared for a corner.

Half time Raith Rovers 1-1 Hibernian

Raith Rovers started the second half brightly and Hardie broke clear and fired in a powerful effort which was deflected past by Liam Fontaine. From the resultant corner Barr flicked the ball on to Stewart who headed the ball into the net from close range.

Hibs responded well and Cummings should have done better when he was set clear however he was unable to gain control of the ball which fell to Keatings. Keatings passed to Stokes but Toshney was able to divert his effort wide.

Hibs should have been level moments later when Gray fired a low cross across the face of goal but Cummings with an open goal in front of him somehow managed to hit the bar from two yards and the danger was cleared.

Cummings was replaced by Farid El Alagui as Hibs looked to get back into the game and Boyle went close with a strike from the edge of the box.

Stokes then fired a volley just over the bar and McGinn had a chance with a free header as play raged from end to end.

Chris Dagnall replaced Keatings in the 72nd minute and the substitute immediately combined with Stokes to set up Boyle but his shot hit the side net.

With six minutes remaining El Alagui flicked a Lewis Stevenson cross into the path of Dagnall but his effort flew inches wide.

A minute later Dagnall's looping header struck the junction of the post and the bar as Hibs pushed desperately for an equaliser but Raith Rovers held on for the victory.

Raith Rovers: Cuthbert, Thomson, Barr, Benedictus, McKeown, Callachan. Toshney, Davidson, Longridge, Stewart, Hardie.
Subs: Law, Anderson, McCord, Panayiotou, Thomas, Connolly, Craigan,

Hibs: Oxley, Gray, McGregor, Fontaine, Stevenson, Bartley, McGinn, Boyle, Keatings, Cummings, Stokes. Subs: Virtanen, Gunnarsson, Donaldson, Thomson, Handling, El Alagui, Dagnall

Referee John McKendrick

Attendance 2386