

# A Jambo in Leith Writes From a Darkened Room

There can be no disguising the fact that, for many Hearts fans, this has been a difficult weekend. The metaphorical stick we have used for decades to whack our city neighbours has been well and truly broken with Hibernian's Scottish Cup triumph over Rangers at Hampden Park on Saturday.

As is its wont, social media websites have been awash with what appears to be divided opinion among the Maroon Army. Some have said they are genuinely pleased Hibs have lifted the famous old trophy for the first time in over a century; others have said they are gutted as they never wanted to see this record broken and point out that some Hibs fans actively encouraged the demise of Heart of Midlothian FC when they entered administration two years ago.

As a Hearts supporter of nearly 40 years, I thought long and hard over the events of the weekend. As it happened, my youngest daughter got married on the afternoon of the cup final – to an avid Hibby. A man who gave me a Christmas present in 2013 which was a road map with the towns of Falkirk, Alloa, and Dumbarton amongst others circled with black ink – he saw this as being useful to me for season 2014/15 as Hearts would be visiting these towns in the Championship. Season 2013/14 was the season the Maroons finished bottom of the Premiership thanks to a 15 point deduction imposed as a result of going into administration. I took the 'gift' in the spirit it was intended – but the smirking Hibby wasn't laughing so much less than five months later when Hibs joined Hearts in the relegation places.

He wasn't laughing either on Saturday when, as the speeches were about to be made, his team fell 2-1 behind to Rangers. But, of course, he was thumping the top table with delight when news reached him (via his mobile phone) that Hibs had come back and scored a late winner to realise his life-long dream. And, somewhat ironically, this was when my feelings on the matter began to change.

I have to admit I didn't want Hibs to win the Scottish Cup. Like the vast majority of the Maroon Army, I had taken much delight over the years in goading our city rivals over their, frankly, embarrassing inability to lift the old trophy. Spectacular failure appeared annually, like a ritual, with Hibs quite often snatching defeat from the jaws of victory. The all-Edinburgh final of 2012 arguably offered the Leith club their best chance of smashing the hoodoo but, typically, a rampant Hearts side put them to the sword and romped to a 5-1 win to lift the trophy for the eighth time – the mother of all Edinburgh derbies and totally eclipsing Hibs 7-0 win in a meaningless league fixture on New Years Day 1973.

'You've Not Won The Big Cup Since 1902' Hearts fans would taunt their rivals from across the capital and we held a feeling of superiority we felt would last forever. To many it will – regardless of Saturday's result. But we wanted Hibs abysmal Scottish Cup record to continue so we could ridicule ad infinitum.

However, the flip side of that particular coin was the many Hibernian fans who I am friends with and the increasing number of Hibbies members of my family have become acquainted with. My other daughter's partner is also an avid Hibby. He didn't go to the wedding on Saturday and duly took his place at Hampden. I opined to said daughter that with Hibs finally winning the cup, not to expect him at the evening reception as he had promised. However, he surprised everyone by appearing at 9.00pm – and perfectly sober. He told me he thought so much of my daughter that he felt guilty about missing the wedding and didn't want to let her down by skipping the reception as well.

The bride's new husband was also aghast at missing something he had dreamt of since being a young boy. But when I suggested to him that Saturday must be the happiest day of his life – him getting married and Hibs winning the Scottish Cup at the same time – he replied it wasn't. He told me, without hesitation, that the happiest day of his life was seeing his young son being born two years earlier.

When I remarried last year, my best man was also of the Hibernian persuasion. We regularly put the world to rights over a half pint

lager shandy (is this right? Ed) and he regales me incessantly with tales of the 'brilliant' Hibs team of the early 1970s who 'destroyed' Leeds United and Juventus in European competition – but still lost..

I thought about all three of those dyed-in-the-wool Hibbies on Saturday evening and other Hibs fans of my acquaintance and of my generation who have yearned for a Scottish Cup triumph. The fella who arrived at the reception late told me he had accompanied his father and young son to the final – a generation thing that supporters of both clubs can readily identify with. His father has failing health and it isn't clear how much longer he has on this Earth. His wish to see his beloved Hibs win the Scottish Cup finally came true on Saturday and it was a story which brought a lump to my throat on an admittedly already emotional day for me.

I could see how much it meant to both lads at the wedding. And I thought about what my best man from last year was doing on Saturday night. We have tormented each other for decades and the 2012 final was, naturally, almost too much for him to take.

So, I eventually came to the conclusion it wasn't a bad thing for Hibernian to win the Scottish Cup at long last. More than a century of pain and anguish for those who choose to follow the Hibeers had finally ended. And, rightly or wrongly, I was pleased for those Hibbies I know personally.

Of course, Hearts supporters have seen this weekend's scenes of celebrations before. Three times in recent years for many of us. Thrashing your city rivals 5-1 is the Holy Grail of Scottish Cup Finals and, unless the Leith team beat Hearts 6-1 in a cup final – a tad unlikely I would suggest – will never be beaten.

We will continue to tease those in green and white about recalling Saturday's memories next season as they head to the likes of Dumbarton, Ayr and Kirkcaldy on miserable midweek evenings in the depths of winter, desperately hoping their side can return to the top flight of Scottish football at the third time of asking.

It's the nature of the banter between Hearts and Hibs fans. Unlike the

'rivalry' between Celtic and Rangers, we don't hate each other.

For this weekend, though, it's about saying 'well done' to Hibernian and congratulate their supporters on seeing their life-long dream being realised. I realise there will be some Hearts supporters who wholly disagree with that statement but football is all about personal opinions. That's what makes it the game it is.

Now, I'm heading back to my darkened room...