

Brave Hibs lose out on penalties against Brondby



Despite a brave performance, Hibs went out of the Europa League on penalties to Danish side Brondby in Copenhagen last night.

Only two Scottish sides had ever recovered from a home defeat to progress in Europe and few gave Neil Lennon's men any chance after trailing 1-0 from the home leg but captain David Gray levelled the tie after 62 minutes before having to leave the field with an arm injury.

Lennon made two changes to the starting XI with Ross Laidlaw replacing Otso Virtanen in goal and Liam Fontaine taking over from Martin Boyle as Hibs reverted to a 5-3-2 formation.

Laidlaw's last game was over a year ago when he lost five goals playing for Elgin City against Annan Athletic and the 24-year-old missed the whole of last season with a lacerated kidney before being freed by Raith Rovers.

The 24-year-old conceded five goals on his last outing in April 2015 – for Elgin City against Annan Athletic.

But after missing the whole of last season with a lacerated kidney and being released by Raith Rovers, he showed no signs of rustiness as he tipped a powerful drive from Norgaard over.

Brondby had the better of the first half without creating any clear cut chances although Laidlaw did well in the 35th minute when he tipped a powerful drive from Christian Norgaard over.

Hibs however took the second half to the hosts and Gray went close with a header from John McGinn's cross.

The break-through came in the 62nd minute when Brøndby failed to clear a Dylan McGeouch corner and Gray was able to flick home Darren McGregor's prodded through ball to spark jubilation amongst the travelling support.

Lebogang Phiri and Svenn Crone both went close and former Celtic striker Teemu Pukki should have done better after finding space in the box but his effort was blocked.

Gray was forced to leave the field with a shoulder injury after being brought down by Norgaard who was shown a yellow card.

Near the end, Pukki broke clear but McGregor impeded his run and was booked despite the home supporters demanding a red card.

Neither side was able to break the deadlock in extra time and the game went to a penalty shoot out.

John McGinn took Hibs' first penalty but his strike was saved by Frederik Ronnow. Paul Hanlon, Grant Holt and Martin Boyle all scored but the Danes converted all five and progressed to the next round.

After the game, the Hibs players all received a deserved standing ovation from the 1023 supporters who had made the journey from Scotland.

Hibs: Laidlaw, Gray, Stevenson, McGregor, Hanlon, Fontaine, McGinn, McGeouch, Bartey, Cummings, Holt. Subs: Virtanen, Stanton, Boyle, Keatings, Forster, Harris, Crane