

Grant Holt doesn't blame ref for denying penalty appeal



Hibs' striker Grant Holt refused to blame referee Juan Martinez Munuere for not awarding a penalty after he was brought down in the box midway through the second half against Brondby.

Holt however was in the minority inside the stadium where the biggest cheer of the night came in the 79th minute when Hibs were awarded a free-kick.

Munuere who sent Hibs' boss Neil Lennon to the stand was booed off the pitch at half time and at full time and the Northern Irishman is likely to miss next week's game in Denmark.

Speaking after the game, Holt said: "The officials didn't have the greatest games. It's a tough job being an official and they don't always get them right but I thought there were a few times they could have done better.

"Austin was taken off after a handball in the middle of the park. Many a referee would have sent him off and it was no coincidence Brondby subbed him a couple of minutes later. The left back also went through the back of Martin Boyle late on and had also been booked earlier."

"The penalty was not given but we can't blame the referee. Some decisions weren't great and they didn't help us, but hopefully we'll get a rub of the green in the second leg.

"He had to make a decision either way. If he didn't think it was a penalty he had to do me for simulation. I told him I had no reason to do down. I got the ball past the defender, I was onto it and ready to shoot, so there was no reason for going

down. _

“It’s a tough job refereeing, but we were dealt with harshly – and Jason’s goal wasn’t offside either. Moments change games. We’re disappointed because we were the better side.”

Television replays show that Jason Cummings was onside when he latched onto Martin Boyle’s pass before firing the ball into the net and the linesman’s decision infuriated Head Coach Neil Lennon who was sent to the stand for his protests.

Holt continued: “He’ll never lose that, will he? He can’t help himself, he wants to win, he’s a winner. I’ve sat on the bench and I know you get frustrated watching games and officials. I don’t know what he said but it’s good to see that as a group, that we all want to win.

“You would want him in the dugout and he’d also have wanted to be there for the return, but it doesn’t matter if he’s sitting in the stands.

“He’ll do his job, set the side out and we all know what he will expect from us as a group. It is all about us, rather than the manager.

“Anyone watching the game saw it was a decent match, end-to-end. They had a couple of chances towards the end because we were trying to chase the game, but we can still take massive heart into the second leg.

“Everyone could see how fit we are as a group, we kept on going until the 90th minute and we will be even fitter over there.

“They were surprised how good we were at times in terms of our ball movement. We didn’t dominate the whole game because they’re a good side who also enjoyed spells of possession. However, we’re confident we can do well over there, if we play as well as we did at home.”

Holt also refused to blame keeper Otso Virtanen, whose mistake allowed Polish striker Kamil Wilczek to score after only 16 seconds.

He added: "We've all made mistakes, I've made many in my career. We don't hold anyone accountable, I'm sure in the coming weeks one of the forwards will put it over the bar from a yard and it will all be our fault. It's just football.

"Otso dealt with it well and didn't go under. We also didn't go under as a team and that's the measure of the people in this squad.

"He didn't need to say anything to us afterwards, we're a group. He'll be disappointed with the mistake, but he came through it well."