

Much changed Hibs side comfortably overcome Birmingham City



A much changed Hibs team comfortably overcame English Championship side Birmingham City in today's pre-season friendly at Easter Road, leaving Neil Lennon a welcome selection headache for the forthcoming season.

Lennon made TEN changes to the starting XI that beat Borndby IF on Thursday night with only Liam Fontaine keeping his place.

Six players who came through the club's academy began the game with a further four on the bench.

City fielded two former Hibs' players, Jonathan Grounds and Clayton Donaldson.

David Murphy, Garry O'Connor and Paul Fenwick who all played for both Hibs and Birmingham were present to watch the game as was former Hibs' Head Coach Alan Stubbs.

The Hibs' youngsters all started the game in determined fashion and appeared eager to impress the boss.

Apart from two long range efforts from Dan Carmichael however the main talking point in the first half was the duel between the supporters. The Blues attempted to create an atmosphere singing 'Rule Britannia' and 'God Save the Queen' but when that failed to achieve the desired response a surprising chorus of 'We love you Rangers' did.

The half time appearance of David Murphy making the half time draw sparked some life amongst the supporters of both sides

and Donaldson should have done better when he found space in the box but his lob went well over the bar.

Substitute Dylan McGeouch then set up Martin Boyle and the winger did well to beat the defender however his powerful strike was deflected inches over the bar.

Moments later Hibs almost took the lead following some great play. McGeouch won possession and found Sam Stanton who surged forward before slipping the ball to Alex Harris on the right wing. The youngster then sent a great cross into the box but Keatings' header went just over the bar.

In the 59th minute Boyle sent a superb shot inches past the post and Hibs dominated possession.

The goal eventually arrived three minutes later when Harris beat his marker down the right wing before sending in a low cross which Keatings did well to control before firing the ball high into the net from an acute angle.

Another superb cross from Harris was cleared by a Blues' defender with Keatings ready to strike at the back post.

Jordon Forster almost made it 2-0 when he connected to a Boyle free-kick but the ball flew agonisingly wide.

Boyle then had the fans on their feet by showing a fantastic piece of skill in midfield, beating three players before Keatings forced an acrobatic save from Tomasz Kuszczak.

Man of the match Callum Crane then earned a roar of approval from the fans which some neat skills down the left then Otso Virtanen produced a fine save however such was his luck that the referee gave a goal kick and Hibs held on for the well deserved victory.

Hibs: Virtanen, Dunsore, Crane, Forster, Fontaine, Martin, Harris, Stanton, Keatings, Carmichael, Boyle. Subs Laidlaw, McGeouch, Hanlon, Cummings, Insall, Allen.

Birmingham City: Kuszczak, Grounds, Shotten, Tesche, Gleeson, Donaldson, Fabrini, Solomon-Otabor, Maghoma, Spector, Morrison. Subs: Legzdins, Robnson, Dacres-Cogley, Adams, Vaughan, Shinnie, Arthur, David, Caddis

Attendance 5094