

Hibs consolidate lead at top of table with comfortable victory over Ayr United



Two goals from on form Martin Boyle and a 'wonder goal' from John McGinn secured a valuable three points for Hibs at Somerset Park this afternoon, consolidating the club's position at the top of the Championship.

Head Coach Neil Lennon kept faith in the starting XI that beat St Mirren last Saturday at Easter Road with 'man of the match' Boyle retaining his place up front, ahead of top scorer Jason Cummings.

Ayr United played the same team that took all three points against Hibs earlier in the season.

A well observed minute's silence was held before kick off in memory of Armistice day.

Hibs started brightly with Boyle being a constant threat to the Ayr defence however his speed seemed to fool the linesman who constantly flagged him for being offside, much to Lennon's annoyance.

He did beat the offside trap in the 17th minute however, latching onto a fine through ball from Fraser Fyvie, but his shot from the edge of the area was tipped round the post by Greg Fleming.

Hibs deservedly took the lead in the 28th minute when Boyle once again used his blistering pace to good advantage and timing his run perfectly before firing a low hard strike past Fleming into the net to the delight of the large travelling support.

Five minutes later, the fans' mood changed when referee Kevin Clancy failed to award a clear cup penalty. Grant Holt managed to get in front of Conrad Balatoni and had control of the ball before the United defender clearly pushed him in the back with both hands.

Once again Lennon was livid on the touchline however there was nothing he could do about the decision.

Hibs continued to push forward in search of a second goal but United held out to half time.

Andrew Shinnie almost added a second just after the break but his strike from 12 yards struck the post then Ofir Marciano produced a fantastic point black save to prevent Adam Forrest equalising.

Holt then showed some great anticipation following a mix up in the Ayr defence but his lob over Fleming went just past the post.

Both Fyvie and Shinnie were booked for mistimed challenges before Boyle made it 2-0 to the visitors in the 77th minute.

John McGinn picked up the ball in midfield, strode forward and picked out Boyle on the edge of the area and the striker fired a powerful low strike from the edge of the area which flew past Fleming into the net.

Brian Graham replaced Holt with ten minutes remaining.

Moments later, Hibs won a free kick 35 yards out. Fyvie played a short pass to McGinn who fired a sensational strike into the net off the inside of the post to wrap things up and secure the three points.

McGinn and Shinnie were replaced by Marvin Bartley and Cummings and Hibs held on for the valuable victory.

Elsewhere Dundee United comfortably beat Queen of the South to

remain three points behind Hibs at the top of the table.

Ayr United: Fleming, Devlin, Boyle, Gilmour, Forrest, Harkins, Cairney, Adams, Meggatt, Balatoni, Docherty. Subs: Hart, Murphy, O'Connell, Crawford, Donald, Nisbet, McGuffie

Hibs: Marciano, Gray, Hanlon, Fontaine, McGinn, Fyvie, Holt, Stevenson, Shinnie, McGregor, Boyle. Subs: Laidlaw, Forster, Graham, Harris, Cummings, Bartley, Martin

Referee Kevin Clancy

Attendance 3100