

Hibs remain top following comfortable victory over Dumbarton



Injury ravaged Hibs remain top of the Championship following a comfortable 2-0 victory over Dumbarton at Easter Road this afternoon.

The win was gained however despite yet another sub standard refereeing display and how the Sons ended the game with eleven players on the pitch remains a mystery.

Neil Lennon made three changes to the starting XI that lost to Dundee United last Friday night. Ross Laidlaw replaced the injured Ofir Marciano in goals, Brian Graham took over from Grant Holt and top scorer Jason Cummings returned to first team duty replacing Dylan McGeouch.

Holt and McGeouch both dropped down to the bench.

In the opening minutes both David Gray and Darren McGregor suffered injuries following reckless challenges which referee John McKendrick ignored, setting the tone for the rest of the game.

In the 17th minute Joe Thomson produced a bad foul on Gray and with supporters demanding a red card, incredibly McKendrick chose only to speak to the midfielder.

Neither side created any real chances in the opening quarter before Hibs eventually started to dominate possession.

Paul Hanlon bulleted a header inches wide from an Andrew Shinnie corner then Martin Boyle set up Graham but the striker was unable to get the ball from under his feet.

Moments later Daniel Harvie launched into a reckless challenge on Gray which deserved a red card but to the astonishment from everyone in the stadium, McKendrick only produced a yellow, much to the displeasure of the fans.

After a sustained spell of pressure, Hibs deservedly took the lead just before the break. Cummings sent over a corner from the left and Hanlon was on hand to hammer the ball past Alan Martin into the net.

Dumbarton started the second period brightly and Robert Thomson went close after a mix up in the Hibs defence then Andrew Shinnie was booked for chopping down Joe Thomson.

In the 63rd minute Shinnie broke clear and was cynically tripped up by former Hearts player Darren Barr who had no chance of getting the ball and once again the referee infuriated the Hibs' fans by only producing a yellow card when a red would have been more appropriate.

Five minutes later, Gray picked up the ball in midfield and floated a cross to Graham who sent a looping header over the keeper and Cummings headed the ball into the net from close range however the linesman's flag was raised.

McGeouch replaced Marvin Bartley as Hibs looked to add to their lead and moments later Lennon's tactics paid off.

Once again Gray found Graham on the edge of the area and the striker did well to control the ball before firing a powerful strike into the corner of the net.

Hibs then had a penalty claim denied when Boyle collected the ball in midfield and ran at the Dumbarton defenders before being brought down but the referee ignored his pleas and waved play on.

Boyle almost scored just before the end with a powerful long range effort but Martin managed to palm the ball away with

Cummings waiting to pounce.

After the game Lennon said: " It was a good performance in the end although we started off a bit sluggish and it took us a while to get going. We didn't flow as well as we can but it could have been a more comfortable win. Two goals and a clean sheet, I'm pretty satisfied with that."

Hibs: Laidlaw, Gray, McGregor, Fontaine, Hanlon, Stevenson, Bartley, Shinnie, Boyle, Graham, Cummings. Subs: Virtanen, Holt, McGeough, Forster, Eardley, Crane, Martin.

Dumbarton: Martin, Docherty, Thomson, Buchanan, Todd, Fleming, Thomson, Harvie, Barr, Smith, Stirling. Subs: Brown, Pettigrew, Stevenson, McCallum, Lyden, Crawford.

Referee John McKendrick

Man of the Match – Andrew Shinnie

Attendance 13,881