

Hibs move four points clear at top of Championship



Hibs moved four points clear at the top of the Championship following a comprehensive 3-0 win over second placed Dundee United in front of a packed Easter Road this evening.

Two Jason Cummings goals in the first half and a late strike by John McGinn secured a valuable three points which puts daylight between the teams.

Neil Lennon made three changes to the starting XI that beat Falkirk last weekend to leapfrog United into top spot in the Championship.

Out went Scott Martin, Grant Holt and Andrew Shinnie and in came Marvin Bartley, Martin Boyle and new signing Chris Humphrey.

Scotland international McGinn was listed amongst the substitutes after returning from injury.

Dundee United's new signing Thomas Mikkelsen started on the bench.

Humphrey had the fans on their feet in the first minute with a great run down the right wing then moments later Boyle did likewise down the left.

The first goal came in the fifth minute when Kris Commons' corner was cleared into the path of Humphrey. The winger's shot was controlled by Cummings who calmly slotted the ball past Cammy Bell into the net.

Hibs piled on the pressure and looked dangerous every time they crossed the half way line.

The second goal came in the 26th minute when Lewis Stevenson's powerful tackle fell to Humphrey. His superb first touch took him away from the defender and he sent in a low cross from the byeline which Cummings slotted into the net from close range.

United then seemed to lose the plot and Charlie Telfer was fortunate not to be shown a direct red following a reckless challenge on Marvin Bartley.

Just before half time Stewart Murdoch should have been sent off after a terrible tackle on Bartley but referee Willie Collum infuriated the home support by only showing a yellow card.

Hibs started the second half as they finished the first and Boyle had a 50 yard run down the left wing before being cynically booked by Mark Durnan on the edge of the area. On this occasion Collum decided a talking to was sufficient.

The referee then booked Bartley for an innocuous challenge sparking outrage from three sides of the stadium.

Nick Van Der Velden was next to see yellow following a late challenge on Lewis Stevenson as Hibs continued to dominate.

Commons then produced a fine piece of skill to set up Boyle but after yet another 50 yard run his shot was blocked. the ball fell to Humphrey but his effort was also cleared.

Murdoch then chopped down Dylan McGeouch right in front of the referee but with everyone in the stadium expecting a red card, the referee decided a free kick was sufficient punishment.

The United manager quickly substituted Murdoch who was replaced by Mikkelson.

With 13 minutes remaining McGinn replaced Commons and the midfielder entered the field to a standing ovation from the supporters.

Durnan, who should have been booked earlier was finally shown a yellow card for a late challenge on Boyle just before Hibs secured the victory.

Boyle took a short corner to McGinn who drove into the box, beat a defender and slid the ball into the net from an acute angle sparking wild celebrations as Easter Road erupted.

James Keatings replaced Humphrey who left the field to a deserved standing ovation.

Tony Andreu was the next United player to be booked then in time added on McGinn produced another piece of magic, finding Keatings but his low cross just evaded Brian Graham.

After the game a delighted Lennon said: " I couldn't have asked any more from my players. It was an outstanding team performance against a very good side.

"It made me very proud and we could have won by more."

During the game the supporters took part in two separate minutes' applause in memory of Hibs' supporters Shaun McKinley and Shaun Woodburn who both sadly passed away over the festive period.

Hibs: Laidlaw, Gray, Hanlon, McGregor, Stevenson, Bartley, McGeouch, Boyle, Commons, Humphrey, Cummings. Subs Virtanen, Fontaine, McGinn, Holt, Keatings, Shinnie, Graham

Dundee United: Bell, Dillon, Dixon, Durnan, Murdoch, Fraser, Telfer, Edjenguele, Flood, Andreu, Van Der Velden. Subs: Zwick, Spittal, Obadeyi, Smith, Mikkelsen, Robson

Referee Willie Collum

Attendance 18,776