

Hibs move six points clear at top of Championship following victory over Dumbarton



Hibs hopes of automatic promotion were given a huge boost this afternoon following a hard fought 1-0 win over Dumbarton at the Cheaper Insurance Direct Stadium.

With Dundee United drawing 3-3 with Queen of the South at Tannadice, Hibs now sit six points clear at the top of the Championship.

Neil Lennon made two changes to the starting XI that comprehensively beat Dundee United last Friday night. Liam Fontaine replaced Paul Hanlon and Fraser Fyvie returned from injury to take Dylan McGeouch's place.

Dumbarton handed a debut to former St Mirren midfielder Stuart Carswell whilst the other new signing, ex Rangers' youngster Tom Lang started on the bench alongside former Hearts' striker Christian Nade.

The game was refereed by Nick Walsh who wrongly sent off Marvin Bartley when Hibs played Ayr United at Easter Road earlier in the season.

Both sides sized each other out in the opening period before Hibs took the lead in the 15th minute with the first chance of the game. Kris Commons, playing the last game of his short term loan, picked up the ball in midfield and found Chris Humphrey on the right wing.

Commons continued his run into the box and when Humphrey's cross was headed out it fell to the on-loan midfielder who calmly guided the ball into the bottom corner of the net.

Dumbarton fought back and dominated possession for a period. Ross Laidlaw did well to prevent both Robert Thomson and Lewis Vaughn from equalising.

Commons had a chance to double Hibs' lead but his powerful 25 yard strike was straight at Alan Martin.

Just before the break, Smith was booked for a foul on Martin Boyle 30 yards from goal and Commons' free kick struck the wall before being cleared.

Hibs started the second half brightly and Martin did well to save from Lewis Stevenson before Humphrey fired inches wide.

Some good defending from David Gray prevented Thomson then Vaughan beat three defenders but produced a superb block to keep the scores level.

Gray then headed the ball off the line as Dumbarton fought hard for an equaliser.

Dumbarton replaced Thomson with Nade whilst Lennon replaced Cummings and Humphrey with Grant Holt and John McGinn.

Holt almost scored immediately but his header flew inches over the bar,

The home fans appealed for a penalty when Gray brought down Stirling on the edge of the box but the referee gave a free kick instead which Vaughan fired into the wall.

Hibs then replaced goal scorer Commons with defender Jordon Forster and Boyle almost wrapped things up with eight minutes remaining after latching onto a Holt flick but his shot went agonisingly wide.

McGinn was brought down on the edge of the area and he took the resultant free kick but he was unable to hit the target.

Holt then went close after a stramash inside the six yard box

but the 'Sons defenders managed to clear the ball.

Dumbarton passed up a great chance to equalise in the dying minute when Nade missed an open goal from three yards out after being unable to control Stirling's powerful low cross with Laidlaw stranded and Hibs held on to secure a valuable three points.

After the game Lennon told BBC Scotland: "It was a very tough game. Dumbarton are on the up. There's no question that Stevie Aitken is doing a great job here.

"It's a difficult pitch but that's no excuse. Dumbarton put us under pressure and we had to see it out. It's a fantastic win and we missed good chances to make it a more flattering scoreline.

"Kris Commons is brilliant. He's not been as fit as we'd like him to be but he's a class player.

"We'll see how Kris is feeling about things [extending his emergency loan] and discuss it next week. Obviously, we'd like to keep hold of him but finances will dictate that."

Dumbarton: Martin, Docherty, Buchanan, Carswell, Fleming, Thomson, Harvie, Barr, Smith, Stirling, Vaughan. Subs Brown, Lang, McCallum, Nade

Hibs: Laidlaw, Gray, Fontaine, McGregor, Stevenson, Bartley, Fyvie, Boyle, Commons, Humphrey, Cummings. Subs Marciano, Forster, McGinn, Holt, Keatings, Shinnie, Graham

Referee Nick Walsh

Attendance 1523