

Hibs move ten points clear at top of Championship after dramatic win over Falkirk.



A sensational last minute goal from James Keatings has all but secured a return to the top flight for Hibernian after a hard fought and sometimes ill-tempered encounter with Falkirk at Easter Road this afternoon.

The 2-1 victory leaves Hibs ten points clear of both Falkirk and Morton with seven games left.

Neil Lennon made four changes to the starting XI that drew with Dumbarton last weekend, with Ross Laidlaw, Jordon Forster, Dylan McGeouch and Jason Cummings replacing Ofir Marciano, David Gray, John McGinn and James Keatings.

Marciano and McGinn both missed out due to international call ups whilst Hibs' captain Gray missed out due to an injury. Darren McGregor skippered the side in Gray's absence.

Paul Hanlon returned to the squad after a period of injury and was listed on the bench alongside Danny Handling who scored for the Development side yesterday.

Fraser Aird who impressed for Canada against Scotland at Easter Road on Wednesday started for the visitors alongside former Hibs' midfielder Tom Taiwo.

A minute's silence was held to mark the events in London earlier this week before the game kicked off at a frenetic pace.

Tackles were flying in as play raged from end to end at 100mph.

Luke Leahy had an early chance but his strike flew inches over the bar.

First name in the book was Taiwo in the 14th minute for a bad challenge on Andrew Shinnie the Jason Cummings followed him for diving.

Luca Garparotto was then luck to escape a red card for a dangerous tackle on Shinnie then Taiwo brought down the same player who was forced to leave the field with an injury and was replaced by Keatings.

In the 44th minute there was a minute's applause in the memory of Hibs' fan Jason Ford who sadly passed away recently.

At half time, several players from the 2007 CIS League Cup winning side received a standing ovation on the pitch to mark the 10th anniversary.

In the 48th minute Martin Boyle picked up the ball in midfield and beat three defenders before his shot was blocked.

Five minutes later John Baird fired just past the post then moments later Cummings went down inside the six yard box as he was attempting to get on the end of Keatings' cross but Hibs appeals were waved away.

Laidlaw produced a superb save from Bob McHugh and Ambrose did well to block from Aird as the Hibs' fans held their breath.

Hibs then had a second penalty claim denied when the ball struck Lewis Kidd's arm and a minute later Boyle was tackled at the edge of the area and for the third time the supporters demanded a spot kick but referee Kevin Clancy awarded a corner.

Lennon was spoken to for protesting then Hibs took the lead in the 74th minute. Keatings sent a fantastic free kick into the box and Efe Ambrose headed the ball past Robbie Thomson.

The Bairns responded immediately and Laidlaw gave away a needless corner. Aird's cross was met by the head of Craig Sibbald at the near post and the ball flew into the net.

Both teams had chances but it was Hibs who secured all three points in dramatic fashion in time added on. Graham headed the ball into the path of Keatings on the left wing. The midfielder cut inside before curling a sensational 25 yard strike into the top corner to the delight of the home supporters.

After the game a delighted Lennon said: "It's nice to win a game in the manner we did. It was a great game of football and Falkirk played their part. I'm delighted."

Morton visit Easter Road on Wednesday night and anything other than a victory for Jim Duffy's side will surely see Hibs win the Championship.

Hibs: Laidlaw, Bartley, Holt, McGeouch, Stevenson, Boyle, Shinnie, Forster, McGregor, Ambrose, Cummings. Subs: Gallacher, Hanlon, Fyvie, Handling, Keatings, Graham, Martin

Falkirk: Thomson, Kidd, Leahy, Taiwo, Kerr, Baird, Sibbald, Grant, Gasparotto, McHugh, Aird. Subs: Rogers, Muirhead, Hippolyte, Austin, Miller, Shepherd, Craigen.

Referee Kevin Clancy

Attendance 16,114