

# Hibs inch closer to automatic promotion with 1-1 draw against Dunfermline



Hibs continued to inch their way to automatic promotion with a 1-1 draw away to Dunfermline this afternoon whilst nearest rivals Morton lost to Dumbarton.

After a traumatic few days, Head Coach Neil Lennon made three changes to the starting XI that drew with Morton on Wednesday night with Brian McLean, Dylan McGeouch and Brian Graham replacing Paul Hanlon, James Keatings and Grant Holt.

McLean, making his Hibs debut, was a last minute replacement for Hanlon who was initially named on the team sheet.

Club captain David Gray returned to the squad after a period of injury but had to be content with a place on the bench whilst Darren McGregor retained his place despite having been sent off in midweek as Hibs are appealing that decision.

Allan Johnston kept faith with the team that beat Morton last Saturday.

The large travelling support showed their feeling clear with a rousing rendition of 'There's only one Neil Lennon' as the game kicked off.

Hibs took the lead in the 11th minute in spectacular fashion after Marvin Bartley found John McGinn in midfield. The Scotland international dropped his shoulder and beat a Pars' defender before firing an unstoppable 35 yard strike which flew into the bottom right hand corner of the net, leaving former Hibs keeper Sean Murdoch helpless.

Shortly before the break both Graham and McGinn were booked for separate incidents.

McGeough and Kallum Higginbotham clashed heads whilst challenging for the ball and the Dunfermline player required treatment before returning to the action.

Hibs started the second half brightly and McGinn almost doubled their lead with a long range effort which was well saved by Murdoch. Cummings clipped the rebound back across the face of goal but Graham skewed wide from six yards out.

In the 58th minute Dunfermline were awarded a controversial penalty kick when the ball appeared to strike Lewis Stevenson's arm. Referee Greg Aitken took his time before pointing to the spot and Higginbotham converted the penalty although Ofir Marciano managed to get his hand to the ball.

Hibs had a succession of corner kicks but were unable to take advantage with 15 minutes remaining James Keatings replaced Martin Boyle and moments later Holt replaced Graham as Hibs looked to grab all three points.

Marciano produced a fine save to deny Nicky Clarke then just before the end Hibs had a penalty claim when Callum Morris grabbed Cummings round the waste as the ball was crossed in but the referee waved play on and the game ended all square.

Elsewhere Falkirk beat Raith Rovers to move to within nine points of Hibs. Morton's defeat leaves them 11 points behind with a game in hand and Dundee United's defeat to Queen of the South leaves them 13 points behind with a game in hand.

After the game Lennon told BBC Scotland: "I thought we were excellent first half, really good value for the lead. They get a penalty which is debatable – if it's the correct decision, it's probably the only one the referee made all afternoon, as far as I'm concerned.

"I'm not too sure Lewis could do much about (the penalty); he's about a yard away. His arm's maybe deemed to be in an unnatural position. He booked Dylan McGeouch for diving – it's ridiculous. And some of the other decisions I wasn't pleased about. I just think the standard of refereeing's not great at the minute.

"We just need to keep ticking off the games at the minute. We should be putting these games away, because we had total control of the game for long periods.

"We keep dragging it out – that's annoying, but we're nearly there."

Dunfermline: Murdoch, Geggan, Morris, Ashcroft, Talbot, Higginbotham, Herron, Wedderburn, McMullan, Cark, Moffat.  
Subs: Williamson, Paton, Hopkirk, Cardie, McCabe, Reilly, Gill

Hibs: Marciano, Hanlon, Bartley, McGinn, McGeouch, Stevenson, Boyle, McGregor, Ambrose, Graham, Cummings. Subs: Laidlaw, Gray, Fyvie, Holt, Murray, Keatings, Martin

Referee Greg Aitken

Attendance 7,058