

# Late Keatings' strike secures victory for Hibs over Raith Rovers



A late James Keatings free-kick secured victory for a Hibs side made up of fringe players and youngsters against Raith Rovers at Easter Road tonight.

With automatic promotion assured, Neil Lennon made 10 changes to the starting XI that narrowly lost to Aberdeen in the William Hill Scottish Cup semi-final on Saturday.

Only Efe Ambrose 'survived' the cull and Lennon handed a league debut to Fraser Murray and listed five Academy players on the bench, Maciej Dabrowski, Innes Murray, Kevin Waugh, Callum Donaldson and Sean Mackie.

Head Coach Lennon watched the game from the stand having been served with an immediate two game ban for adopting an aggressive attitude to Morton boss Jim Duffy at the end of the 0-0 draw on 29th March.

Raith Rovers provided a guard of honour for the champions and Hibs started the game in style.

Murray almost made a dream start to his Hibs' career but his diving header from a Chris Humphrey cross flew inches wide.

Humphrey then fired in another dangerous cross which Brian Graham headed toward the goal but Pavol Penska produced a superb save.

The duo combined again in the 17th minute but Graham's header went over the bar.

Stand in skipper Andrew Shinnie then Murray fired just over the bar from distance as Hibs dominated possession although Rovers looked dangerous on the break and both Chris Johnston and Declan McManus went close to opening the scoring.

Hibs took a deserved lead just before the break when Graham set up Humphrey on the right wing and his cross to the back post was fired into the net by Keatings.

McManus had the ball in the net for Rovers but was harshly adjudged to have fouled Alex Harris in the build up.

Raith Rovers equalised in the 66th minute after a mix up in the Hibs defence left McManus free to slot home from 12 yards.

Raith then piled on the pressure and McManus chipped Ross Laidlaw only to see the ball rebound off the post then the same player had a spectacular overhead kick tipped over the bar.

Hibs replaced Graham with Gran Holt and the substitution paid immediate dividends when the big striker got on the end of a fine long ball from Keatings to prod the ball past Penska into the net.

Rovers replied immediately although substitute Ryan Hardie looked well offside when he ran through and rounded Laidlaw to equalise.

In time added on the referee awarded a free kick on the edge of the box for a deliberate handball then to the fury of the Hibs' fans paced eight steps for the wall. Despite that Keatings curled in a superb left footed shot which flew into the bottom corner of the net to the delight of the Hibs' fans.

After the game Neil Lennon said: " I'm delighted, really pleased. I thought we deserved it and I am really pleased with some of the performances out there tonight."

Hibs: Laidlaw, McLean, Keatings, Shinnie, Forster, Ambrose,

Humphrey, Graham, Harris, Martin, Murray Subs: Dabrowski,  
Bratley, Holt, Murray, Waugh, Donaldson, Mackie

Raith Rovers: Penska, Thomson, McHattie, M'Voto, Johnston,  
Stewart, Barr, Matthews, McManus, Thompson, C.Barr Subs:  
Brennan, Benedictus, Roberts, Court, Hardie

Referee Greg Aitken

Attendance 13,604