

Hibs reach semi-final of Betfred League Cup after 3-2 win over Livingston



Hibs are through to the Betfred League Cup semi-final after twice coming from behind to defeat a brave Livingston team at Easter Road tonight.

Head Coach Neil Lennon made four changes from the starting XI that drew 2-2 with Motherwell on Saturday.

Ross Laidlaw, Lewis Stevenson, Vykintas Slivka and Danny Swanson replaced Ofir Marciano, Steven Whittaker, Brandon Barker and Simon Murray.

The only other time the pair have met in the tournament was the 2004 final which the West Lothian team won.

Hibs started brightly and created four good chances in the first five minutes but it was the visitors who went ahead with their first attack of the night.

Raffaele De Vita sent in a dangerous free kick which Scott Pittman headed into the net to the delight of the small band of travelling supporters.

David Gray was forced to leave the field with a hamstring injury and was replaced by Steven Whittaker who slotted into the right back position.

Hibs equalised in the 17th minute when Martin Boyle rolled the ball into the path of Swanson who curled a shot past former Hearts keeper Neil Alexander.

If the Hibs fans thought the danger was over they were

mistaken and the Lions re-took the lead 10 minutes later when De Vita fired an unstoppable shot into the net off the underside of the bar with Laidlaw helpless.

Hibs fought back immediately and a great one two between Martin Boyle and Anthony Stokes ended with the winger firing the ball into the net from an acute angle.

After a pulsating 45 minutes, the second half calmed down with Hibs dominating possession and creating the better chances but Livingston always looked dangerous on the break without creating any clear cut chances.

Lennon replaced Slivka with Dylan McGeouch and the former Celtic midfielder made the difference. His vision and energy helped Hibs keep possession as they sought the winner.

With eight minutes remaining Swanson found Paul Hanlon in the penalty box and as he was running away from goal, he was barged in the back by Pittman and referee Bobby Madden pointed to the spot.

Alexander tried to delay the kick as an act of gamesmanship but it made no difference to Stokes who calmly slotted the ball low into the bottom left hand corner of the net to secure a place in the semi-final.

After the game a delighted Neil Lennon said: "I thought we were excellent. The character that the team showed was fantastic. You are looking at a very happy man."

Elsewhere Rangers beat Partick Thistle 3-1 after extra time to join Hibs in the semis. Celtic face Dundee on Wednesday and Motherwell face Aberdeen on Thursday.

Hibs: Laidlaw, Gray, Hanlon, Bartley, McGinn, Slivka, Swanson, Stevenson, Boyle, Ambrose, Stokes. subs: Marciano, Whittaker, Matulevicius, Murray, Barker, Porteous

Livingston: Alexander, Lithgow, Byrne, Pittman, Todorov,

Cadden, Jacobs, Carrick, De Vita, Hackett. subs: maley,
Longridge, Mullin, Mullen, Mackin, Robinson, Brown

Referee Bobby Madden

Attendance 8535