

St Johnstone end Hibs' winning streak with late goal



A goal in the dying seconds ended Hibs' four game winning streak this afternoon at a freezing cold Easter Road.

Neil Lennon made one change to the starting XI that beat Dundee two weeks ago with Anthony Stokes replacing Dylan McGeouch who was forced to leave the field with an injury in the first half of that game.

To the relief of the Hibs' fans, McGeouch recovered sufficiently to warrant a place on the bench.

Former Hibs' captain Liam Craig started for the Saints.

Craig Thomson, the referee that the Hibs' fans 'love to hate' took charge.

Hibs dominated a lacklustre first half but the best chance fell to Craig whose 12-yard strike produced a sensational save from Ofir Marciano.

The hosts best chance fell to Martin Boyle whose long-range effort was pushed away by Zander Clark.

In the 55th minute, a great ball from John McGinn found Barker but keeper Clark managed to palm his cross to safety, injuring himself in the process.

Nine minutes later Lennon made a double substitution, bringing on McGeouch and Ryan Porteous for Barker and David Gray.

The pair almost made a dramatic impact when Porteous appeared to be brought down inside the box attempting to get to McGeouch's lobbed pass, but to the fury of the home supporters

referee Thomson waved away their appeals.

With Hibs pressing forward at every opportunity, the almost took the lead when McGinn found Martin Boyle unmarked inside the area. His shot was blocked but fell to Efe Ambrose. The defender side-footed the ball goalwards and Simon Murray back-healed it but it hit off a defender and was cleared for a corner.

St Johnstone looked dangerous on the break and only a fantastic last ditch tackle from Porteous denied them the lead in the 71st minute.

Three minutes later Saints opened the scoring against the run of play when Craig headed the ball across goals into the path of Murray Davidson who nodded the ball into the net from close range.

Hibs continued to press forward and Deivydas Matulevicius replaced Marvin Bartley.

With six minutes remaining, Martin Boyle beat five defenders before being brought down 25-yards from goal. Stokes played a short pass to McGinn but the Scotland international's strike flew inches wide.

In the last minute, Ambrose surged forward and his cross was nodded on by Matulevicius into the path of Boyle whose half volley was handled by Joe Shaughnessy. The ball fell to Murray who fired it into the net but the referee gave the penalty kick.

Stokes calmly fired the spot-kick low into the corner of the net sparking wild scenes amongst the fans.

The players clearly thought they could still win the game and pushed forward again but the visitors hit on the break once again. Davidson's shot was well saved but the ball fell to Craig. His effort from close range was blocked by Marciano but

the ball fell to Kenny McLean who tapped the ball into the net from close range to the delight of the travelling support.

After the game Lennon said: "I don't think we deserved to lose but we didn't deserve to win either. We were OK but not brilliant. We should have seen the game out and taken the draw."

Hibs: Marciano, Gray, Hanlon, Bartley, McGinn, S.Murray, Stevenson, Boyle, Barker, Ambrose, Stokes. Subs: Dabrowski, Slivka , Matulevicius, McGeouch, Shaw, F.Murray, Porteous

St Johnstone: Clark, Tanser, Alston, Shaughnessy, Davidson, McLean, O'Halloran, Comrie, Paton, Craig. Subs: Mannus, Johnstone, Foster, McClean, Scougall, Gordon, Cummins

Referee Craig Thomson

Attendance 17,044