

European football returns to the capital as Hibs demolish NSI Runavik



European football returned to the capital tonight as Hibs demolished NSI Runavik 6-1.

The part-timers were no match for Neil Lennon's men and Hibs will almost certainly face Asteras Tripoli in the second qualifying round.

The big talking point ahead of kick-off was the absence of John McGinn which sparked increased speculation that he is Celtic bound. Had he featured against NSI then he would have been ineligible for any Europa League matches Brendan Rodgers may have to play this season.

The 'official' line however is that he was not risked due to him carrying a thigh injury. In the end however McGinn wasn't missed.

Adam Bogdan and Stevie Mallan both made their competitive debut for the club as Lennon watched from the Director's Box due to a European ban from his Celtic days.

Hibs opened the scoring in the second minute after Vykintas slid a through ball into the path of Florian Kamberi who was clearly bundled over by Jens Joensen as he was about to shoot. The referee had no hesitation in pointing to the spot and Kamberi dispatched the resultant penalty despite a brave effort by goalkeeper Tordur Thomsen.

Moments later Kamberi was booked after a clash with Joensen although had the referee had the benefit of VAR Hibs would have had a second penalty as Joensen clearly wrestled Hibs' Swiss striker to the ground.

The visitors were determined to leave their mark on the game and the referee was lenient with a number of hard tackles. Kamberi in particular was subjected to some horrendous treatment.

Kamberi grabbed his second of the night in the 20th minute from close range after good work on the right by Martin Boyle.

Eight minutes later Steven Whittaker found Oli Shaw who held off his marker and fired a powerful strike low into the bottom corner of the net from 25 yards.

NSI were reduced to 10-men in the 32nd minute after a disgraceful challenge on Boyle by Einar Trondargjogv who was correctly shown a straight red card.

Just before the break, Mallan opened his Hibs account. The midfielder picked up the ball 25 yards out, beat two defenders then fired a low shot goalwards. Thomsen appeared to have it covered but inexplicably allowed the ball to squirm under his body into the net.

Hibs made it 5-0 two minutes after the restart when Paul

Hanlon slid an inch perfect pass into the path of Kamberi who fired the ball into the net from eight yards.

He was immediately replaced by Simon Murray and left the field to a deserved stading ovation after scoring the first European hat-trick at Easter Road since Alan Gordon against Hajduk Split 45 years ago.

The supporters were looking for double figures however Petur Knudsen pulled one back from a free-kick in the 53rd minute.

From then on it was attack after attack toward the Famous Five Stand.

Shaw missed a great chance from 10 yards then Lewis Stevenson and Mallan both hit the bar.

Danny Swanson replaced Darren McGregor and Marvin Bartley replaced Oli Shaw as Hibs pressed for more goals.

The sixth eventually arrived in the 83rd minute when Mallan fired a superb 30-yard free kick into the top corner although the keeper managed to get a hand to it and possibly should have done better.

Hibs will now make the 880-mile round trip next week for the second leg which will take place at the Svan Gaskard Stadium in Toftier, but participation in the next round is virtually certain.

Hibs: Bogdan, Whittaker, Ambrose, Hanlon, McGregor, Stevenson, Boyle, Mallan, Kamberi, Slivka, Shaw. Subs: Laidlaw, Gray, Bartley, Swanson, S.Murray, Martin, Porteous

NSI Runavik: Thomsen, Joensen, Troest-Davidsen, Benjaminsen, Olsen, Fredericksberg, Trondargjogv, Justinussen, Knudsen, Bardur Hansen, Betuel Hansen. Subs: Gango, Langgaard, Mortensen, Hentze, Benjaminsen, Olsen, M. Mortensen

Referee Manfredas Lukjancukas

Attendance 12,501