

Hibs emerge victorious after five goal thriller at Easter Road



Hibs emerged victorious against on-form Kilmarnock after yet another pulsating 90 minutes at Easter Road this afternoon.

The last time Killie visited Leith, they lost in an eight-goal thriller, and although there were three fewer goals today, the quality of play was just as good.

Both sides attacked from the kick off and provided the 17,622 fans inside the stadium with excellent value for money.

Neil Lennon made three changes to the starting XI that lost to Livingston two weeks ago with Florian Kamberi, David Gray and Emerson Hyndman replacing Paul Hanlon, Lewis Allan and Jamie Maclaren.

New signing Mark Milligan was listed amongst the substitutes.

The travelling support made themselves heard with a song demonstrating their feelings toward the SFA after recent decisions by the compliance officer.

Referee John Beaton showed leniency early on, allowing a couple of clear fouls to go unpunished before the visitors created the first chance of the game in the 5th minute.

The Hibs' defence fell asleep at a corner allowing Chris Burke a free shot from 22 yards which flew just past the post.

Hibs took the lead six-minutes later when Daryl Horgan showed great skill on the left wing before cutting inside and finding Martin Boyle who was fouled by Aaron Tshibola in the act of shooting and Stevie Mallan fired a sensational free-kick into the top corner of the net from 25-yards.

Kamberi and Boyle then combined well down the right before the striker's shot was deflected past the post. Mallan sent in a great corner and Gray evaded his marked to bullet a tremendous header past former Hearts' keeper Jamie McDonald into the bottom corner of the net.

The hosts looked in control but Kilmarnock pulled one back in the 26th minute when Eamonn Brophy latched onto a fine through pass from Stephen O'Donnell before dispatching the ball past Adam Bogdan.

Hibs almost restored their two-goal advantage after a quick break from a corner and Horgan slid the ball into the path of Boyle but his close-range effort was blocked.

The referee incurred the wrath of the home fans when he missed a clear handball and Ryan Porteous did well to block Burke's strike.

Mallan went close from 20-yards as play raged from end to end but it Kilmarnock who ended the first half on a high when Greg Stewart curled a superb 20-yard strike into the net after good

work from Burke.

Thomas Agyepong replaced Boyle for the start of the second half then McDonald did well to save a long-range effort from Mallan.

Agyepong looked lively on the right wing as both sides pressed forward. Hibs made a double substitution in the 71st minute when Australian internationals Millgan and Maclaren replaced Hyndman and Whittaker and both entered the field to a tremendous reception from the fans.

Kamberi then did well to hold up the ball before setting up Agyepong who beat a defender inside the area but his shot was blocked.

Hibs eventually grabbed the decisive goal in the 78th minute after Maclaren won a header which fell to his strike partner Kamberi. The Swiss striker slid the ball back into his path and he managed to get a touch before being brought down by Kirk Broadfoot.

Referee Beaton had no hesitation in pointing to the spot and Kamberi fired a perfect penalty into the bottom corner of the net to the delight of the home supporters.

Killie fought back and Bogdan produced a great fingertip save to deny substitute Kris Boyd's header from Jordan Jones' corner.

The visitors had a penalty claim in the last minute when Efe Ambrose appeared to catch Broadfoot but the official waved away their appeals and Hibs held on to secure a valuable three points which sees them to climb to fifth in the table.

After the game Lennon told BBC Scotland. "His (Stevie Mallan's) deliveries today were outstanding. His play in general was very good and the quality of his goal was magnificent. The first four goals were outstanding.

“In the second half, we got control without being penetrative, but the subs made a big difference for us.

“Jamie (Maclaren) is the wrong side of him and gets his foot taken away,” he added. “He has read it and he is just a clever player.”

Kilmarnock manager Steve Clarke disagreed with Lennon’s assessment of the penalty.

“To lose to such a soft and dubious decision is disappointing,” Clarke told BBC Scotland. “It looked to me as if Maclaren kicks Kirk on the Achilles, which would make it seem a strange award.

“To compound that, Efe Ambrose kicked Kirk in their box in injury-time and we didn’t get that one, so it’s a bad day for us.

“I felt we did enough in the first half to show we could have gone on to win. I certainly didn’t expect to lose that game.”

Hibs: Bogdan, Gray, Porteous, Ambrose, Whittaker, Stevenson, Boyle, Mallan, Hyndman, Horgan, Kamberi. Subs: Laidlaw, Slivka, Milligan, Maclaren, Agyepong, McGregor, Shaw.

Kilmarnock: Macdonald, O’Donnell, Taylor, Broadfoot, Power, Findlay, Stewart, Eamon Brophy, Tshibola, Burke. Subs Bachmann, Byrne, Boyd, Ndjoli, Enobakhare, Boyd, Wilson

Referee John Beaton

Attendance 17,622