

Neil Lennon likens sectarianism in Scotland to racism following coin attack



Hibs Head Coach Neil Lennon has likened the sectarian abuse he receives in Scotland to racism.

The Northern Irishman was struck on the face by a coin thrown from Hearts' Main Stand on Wednesday night as he celebrated a late 'goal' being chalked off for offside.

Many, including Police Federation chief Les Gray and former Hibs' and Celtic player Gary Caldwell have publically stated that his behaviour toward the home supporters contributed to the assault but Lennon refutes this and pointed out that graffiti saying 'Hang Neil Lennon' near to the ground was in place before the game started.

At an explosive pre-match press conference yesterday Lennon said: "The first day I stepped on to the pitch at Windsor Park as a Celtic player I was booed every time I touched the ball, having previously played 36 times and had nothing.

"It was my association with Celtic, being high profile. There's no question in my mind that was the reason behind it.

"You call it sectarianism here in Scotland, I call it racism.

If a black man is abused, you are not just abusing the colour of his skin, you are abusing his culture, his heritage, his background.

“It’s the exact same when I get called a Fenian, a pauper, a beggar, a tarrier.

□“These people with the sense of entitlement or superiority complex. And all I do is stand up for myself.

“People should know better. It’s pretty poor all this, I was goading people, I bring it on myself. There’s an effigy outside Tynecastle saying ‘hang Neil Lennon’. That was before the game. Did I bring that on myself?

“Hanging people is something the Ku Klux Klan did in the 60s to black people so maybe that’s the mentality of people who want to write this stuff.

“This has got to stop. Everyone says I play the victim. I don’t. I had 15 years in England of nothing, so the first day I step into Scotland this sort of stuff began.

“And it’s not because I’m an aggressive character. You all know me. I’m not aggressive at all. I’m competitive, sometimes I cross the line just like any normal manager. So this ‘brings it on himself’, I’m very angry about those comments.”