

Lee strikes gold to give Hearts victory at Easter Road

Hibernian 0 Heart of Midlothian 1

Ladbrokes Premiership, Saturday 29th
December 2018 – Easter Road

Hearts recorded their first league win at Easter Road since April 2014 when a spectacular Olly Lee goal in the first half was enough to ensure the Jambos earned the bragging rights in the capital city after a typical blood and thunder Edinburgh derby on Saturday evening.

Lee's unstoppable effort from 25 yards meant joy for the travelling Maroon Army and left Hibernian manager Neil Lennon contemplating what needs to be done during the January transfer window.

The game kicked off at 5.30pm to suit the needs of broadcasters Sky Sports and with many supporters having

spent Saturday afternoon in the pub the atmosphere inside Easter Road Stadium was even more raucous than usual for an Edinburgh derby.

Hearts were first to threaten when Peter Haring pounced on a loose ball and sent Olly Lee down the right wing. The Englishman crossed for Steven Naismith who headed back to Haring who set up Lee for a shot on goal which took a touch off Vyktintas Slivka before being saved by Hibs keeper Adam Bogdan.

Hibs then had a chance when youngster Sean Mackie crossed for Oli Shaw, but the striker headed the ball over. Then, Efe Ambrose drilled in a shot which was saved well by Hearts keeper Colin Doyle.

Midway through the first half Olly Lee's corner for Hearts found Michael Smith who had time and space to shoot for goal, but the defender couldn't direct the ball away from Bogdan and a real chance was gone for the visitors. Five minutes later, however, Hearts did go in front – and what a goal it was!

Sean Clare found Olly Lee 25 yards from goal. Despite having his back to goal, the midfielder turned Hibs Paul Hanlon and blasted a ferocious shot which rose high past Bogdan and into the net. Joy for the Hearts support in the Dunbar Road end while the rest of the stadium was stunned.

Hibs, though, stormed back. Stevie Mallan's free-kick from 30 yards out found Steven Whittaker and the

former Rangers defender forced Colin Doyle into a fine save.

Sean Clare then had a chance to increase the visitors' lead when he got away from a couple of Hibs players but his shot on goal was high and not so mighty.

Half-time: Hibs 0 Hearts 1

Hearts almost made to 2-0 right at the start of the second half when Clare's drive into the Hibs penalty box fell to Steven Naismith and the Scotland striker forced Bogdan into another fine save.

Hibs upped the ante in a bid to get back into the game. Oli Shaw fired in a magnificent shot from 25 yards that clipped the crossbar with Colin Doyle helpless. Sean Mackie then tested the Hearts keeper before firing in a long-range attempt which went wide.

Hearts should have added a second with 20 minutes to go when great play from Naismith sent Sean Clare through but the Englishman, looking desperately short of confidence in recent weeks, fired in a weak shot which was easily saved by Bogdan.

With ten minutes left there was a great chance for Hibs to draw parity. Steven Whittaker fired in a long-range effort which looked a goal all the way until keeper Doyle got a finger to the ball to push it on to the post. The ball then spun along the goal line and bounced off the other post before going out of play. The home

support couldn't believe it and it was a clear signal this was going to be Hearts night.

There was another let off for Hearts when Naismith unintentionally diverted the ball towards his own goal, but Doyle was quick to react to prevent an equaliser.

Hibs launched everything at their rivals in the closing moments but Hearts, with Christophe Berra immense, held on to secure a long-awaited victory at Easter Road. The Maroons are now seven points ahead of Hibs and are six points off the top of the Ladbrokes Premiership.



Hearts fans celebrate on the other side of Edinburgh
Hearts manager Craig Levein was, naturally, a happy man after the game. He told BBC Sport Scotland:

"We had to show a bit of resilience, especially at the end when they threw Darren McGregor up and really bombarded us. We just edged it, but this is a massive match for us. I feel we should be further up the league table, but it's been a tough few weeks"

His

Hibs counterpart Neil Lennon told BBC Sport Scotland:

"I feel we deserved something out of the game, we didn't deserve to lose. We lost a goal to a quality strike then the grease paint cost us an equaliser."

"It wasn't a poor performance by any manner of means, I think we tried to really force the game, especially second half. If we don't improve we'll finish in the bottom six."

Hibs: Bogdan, Whittaker,
Hanlon, Horgan (Hyndman, 62'), Slivka (Gray, 73'), Mallan,
Kamberi, McGregor,
Ambrose, Shaw, Mackie.

Hearts: Doyle, Smith, Haring
(Bozanic, 54'), Berra, Lee (Mulraney, 82'), Clare, Djoum,
Naismith, Garuccio,
Godinho, Dikamona.

Referee: Kevin Clancy

Attendance: 20,200

Top man: Hearts captain Christophe
Berra.