

Hibs leapfrog Hearts into fifth place in the SPFL



Hibs leapfrogged city rivals Hearts and moved into fifth place in the SPFL after a 2-1 victory over Livingston at the Tony Macaroni Arena tonight.

Paul Heckingbottom made one change to the starting XI that beat Motherwell with Darren McGregor returning from suspension at the expense of Vykintas Slivka.

Hibs took a large travelling support to West Lothian and started brightly with Stevie Mallan forcing Livingston's keeper Liam Kelly into a superb save within the opening minutes.

The remainder of the first half was evenly fought with neither team creating any meaningful chances.

Hibs started to dominate from the start of the second half. Mallan went close with a fine long range effort and new Scotland international Marc McNulty had a close range effort

blocked.

Heckingbottom replaced Daryl Horgan and Stephane Omeonga with Slivka and Fraser Murray in the 68th minute and took the lead three minutes later when David Gray's header from Mallan's corner was blocked on the line.

The ball fell to Paul Hanlon who fired it high into the net from eight yards to the delight of the travelling supporters.

Two minutes later Mallan made it 2-0 following a superb piece of skill, controlling the ball out of the air and calmly slotting it under Kelly. In time added on, Livingston were awarded a penalty when Lawson went down following a challenge by Lewis Stevenson.

The decision looked harsh and Ryan Hardie made no mistake from the spot. Hibs held out to secure the three points, making it 16 points from a possible 18 for Heckingbottom.

After the game Heckingbottom told BBC Scotland: "It was a tough game to watch at times, frustrating. But I can really see now why Livi have been such a tough nut to crack at home. Teams are starting to show them the respect they deserve.

"They made it difficult for us. They controlled the game in that respect and stopped us playing the way we wanted to play. We had to up the tempo and then all of a sudden the game becomes an awful lot easier.

"I'm delighted with three points but we had to work extremely hard to get them."

"We're always chasing the team in front and we've gone up another place. Depending on results tomorrow we might be back down but hopefully not. We'll target the next team. We want to win as many games as possible and finish as high up as possible."

Livingston: Kelly, Odoffin, Gallagher, Lithgow, Brown, Lawson,

Jacobs, Erskine, Pittman, Sibbald, Robinson Subs: Lamie, Byrne, Hardie, Lawless, Stewart, De Vita, Wylde.

Hibs: Marciano, Gray, McGregor, Hanlon, Stevenson, Mallan, Milligan, Omeonga, Horgan, Kamberi, McNulty. Subs: Bartley, Slivka, Shaw, Murray, Dabrowski, Mackie, Allan.

Referee Nick Walsh – Attendance 4774