

Last Edinburgh derby of the season finishes all square



Hibs remain three points ahead of city rivals Hearts following a hard fought and ill-tempered 90 minutes at Easter Road this afternoon.

Paul Heckingbottom named an unchanged side following last Sunday's draw with Celtic whilst Craig Levein made four changes to his starting XI that lost to Rangers.

A minute's applause was held in memory of Scottish football legend Billy McNeil with both sets of fans respectfully taking part however a small number of visiting supporters started singing the Hearts song which resulted booing from other parts of the stadium.

Hearts started brightly and Conor Shaughnessy's shot was comfortably saved by Ofir Marciano whilst at the other end Stephane Omeonga robbed John Souttar before rounding Zdenek Zlamal but the keeper did well to recover and block his cross.

In the 17th minute, a superb last-gasp block from Paul Hanlon deflected Arnould Djoum's shot wide of goal.

Hibs gradually took control of the game and almost took the lead when Omeonga's cross found Daryl Horgan who lifted the ball over Zlamal but onto the roof of the net.

Christophe Berra then did well to block Flo Kamberi's shot from the edge of the box as play raged from end to end. In the 43rd minute Jake Mulraney produced an outstanding piece of skill, beating several Hibs' defenders before firing a powerful strike which Marciano punched away.

Just before the break, Stevenson's powerful long-range effort was punched away by Zlamal before Berra cleared Marc McNulty's follow-up from the line.

Vykintas Slivka replaced Kamberi at half time and Hibs began the second half in style. Stevenson almost opened the scoring with a piledriver which deflected off Berra for a corner then Stevie Mallan forced Zlamal into a good save at his near post.

Stevenson did well down the left wing before finding Slivka whose header looked goal-bound but the Hearts' keeper produced a sensational save to keep the score level.

On the hour mark Uche Ikpeazu caught Paul Hanlon inside the area and referee Craig Thomson immediately pointed to the spot but Marc McNulty fired the resultant penalty kick wide of the post.

Moments later however Hibs took a deserved lead when Daryl Horgan's driven low cross was deflected into the net off Berra with McNulty waiting to pounce.

Hibs continued to press forward looking to extend their lead but it was the visitors who equalised against the run of play with six minutes remaining when substitute Steven Maclean held off Mark Milligan before cutting the ball back to Ikpeazu who

slotted the ball into the net from eight yards, sparking delight in the away end.

Unfortunately, despite repeated warning to both sets of fans from their respective clubs, a smoke bomb was thrown onto the pitch.

Two minutes later and Ikpeazu almost gave Hearts the lead with an overhead kick but Marciano produced a fine save, tipping the ball over the bar.

Eight players were booked, six from Hearts and two from Hibs.

The result sees Hibs move four points behind fourth-top Kilmarnock and Heckingbottom told BBC Scotland after the game. "Sometimes you don't get what you deserve and I think today was one of those games.

"We took our foot off the gas when we wanted to keep being positive. "We're still unbeaten, the boys are doing fantastic, and I'm pleased with lots of parts of the game, but we just had a chat there about one particular area where we really want to improve."

Levein said: Putting Harry and Connor into the team has people on their toes, because there are only 11 spaces for the cup final and those two might stake a claim.

"The two of them did very well considering the size of the game. I am really pleased with Harry and he showed some touches that tell us that he's going to be a really good player for us in the future.

"It was Harry's 30th appearance for us and he gets a place in the first-team dressing-room for us as well, so it was a good day for him."

Hibernian: Marciano, Gray, Hanlon, Milligan, Horgan (Agyepong 88'), McNulty, Mallan, Stevenson, Kamberi (Slivka 46'), McGregor, Omeonga. Substitutes not used: Bogdan, Bartley,

Gauld, Spector, Shaw.

Heart of Midlothian: Zlamal, M. Smith, Shaughnessy, Souttar, Barra, Clare (Maclean 68'), Djoum, Ikpeazu, Cochrane (Bozanic 71'), Mulraney, C. Smith (Edwards 64'). Substitutes not used: Doyle, Lee, Brandon, Dikamona.

Referee: Craig Thomson. Attendance: 19,395.