

No goals but plenty of action in the battle of the greens



The points were shared after a pulsating 95 minutes of non-stop action between Hibs and champions elect Celtic in the Leith sunshine this afternoon.

Rangers victory over Hearts at Tynecastle yesterday meant that former Hibs' Head Coach Neil Lennon would not be able to secure the title at Easter Road.

Paul Heckingbottom retained the same team that beat Hearts at Tynecastle two weeks ago but for a change was able to deploy a strong bench with Ryan Gauld and Thomas Agyepong both returning from injury.

The game started at a frenetic pace and Hibs created three good chances in the opening five minutes with Daryl Horgan and Stephane Omeonga both testing Scott Bain.

Stevie Mallan then shot just wide as Hibs piled on the pressure. Paul Hanlon then went close after Darren McGregor

headed a cross into his path then Marc McNulty just missed a Horgan cross.

The visitors looked dangerous on the break however and Ofir Marciano produced a sensational save to deny Odsonne Edouard. Moments later he did well to save a powerful header from Kristoffer Ajer.

Omeonga and Scott Brown battled for midfield dominance as play raged from end to end.

Marc Milligan and Darren McGregor both did well to clear dangerous crosses before both David Gray and Brown required treatment after a Celtic attack.

Brown and Omeonga clashed off the ball but it was Florian Kamberi who was booked for pushing the Celtic captain in the back.

Both Brown and the referee were booed off at half time. In the 48th minute, a minute's applause took place in tribute to lifelong fan Bradley Welsh who was shot dead earlier in the week.

During this period McNulty fired just wide. The Hibs' fans booing of Nick Walsh seemed to backfire as Celtic got every 50-50 decision and Mallan was booked for winning a tackle on Mikael Lustig.

The Celtic defender indicated that he was seriously injured however after Mallan was shown the yellow card Lustig got up and didn't require treatment, much to the fury of the supporters.

Gray earned a tremendous cheer for a hard tackle on Brown. Hanlon was the next to see a yellow card for a trip on Jonny Hayes on the edge of the box and Marciano produced a world class save to deny Edouard from the resultant free-kick.

The Frenchman should have scored when James Forrest's flow

cross from the left was missed by Darren McGregor but he was unable to control the ball and it went wide.

In the closing minutes McNulty headed wide from a Stevenson cross before Bain produced a point-blank save to deny the on-loan striker after Vykintas Slivka headed a Lewis Stevenson delivery into his path.

In time added on, Stevenson was booked for a trip and Thomas Rogic fired the resultant free kick into the wall to the relief of the home fans.

Marciano then denied Edouard with yet another superb one-handed stop and demonstrated why he earned the man of the match award with another acrobatic save from Jozo Simunovic's powerful header.

Both sets of players were applauded off the pitch at the end.

After the final whistle Heckingbottom told BBC Sportsound: "They're performing really well, giving everything and that's all the fans want. All Celtic's best chances were when they played through us. For spells we showed what we want to be about. Being greedy, I want to win the game. We needed to score when we were on top first half."

Neil Lennon said: Good game. Towards the end, we were well on top and we should've won the game with the chances that we had. We have to do it for 90 minutes. We didn't start the game well."Ofir Marciano made some great saves. We should be scoring them, at least one of them. This is their time, it's their title to win. Regardless of what happens to me, I'm here to get them over the line. They're on the cusp of something very special. Are we dragging our heels a little bit? I don't know. The last two league results, 0-0 draws. Not good enough."

Hibs are now three points ahead of Hearts whom they face next weekend and five behind Kilmarnock in fourth place.

Hibernian: Marciano, Gray, Hanlon, Milligan (Slivka 70'), Horgan (Agyeponog 82'), McNulty, Mallan, Stevenson, Kamberi (Shaw 70'), McGregor, Omeonga. Substitutes not used: Bogdan, Bartley, Gauld, Spector.

Celtic: Bain, Izaguirre, Simunovic, Brown, Hayes (Sinclair 70'), Ntcham (Rogic 61'), Edouard, Lustig, Ajer, McGregor, Forrest (Weah 84'). Substitutes not used: De Vries, Toijan, Burke, Benkovic.

Referee: Nick Walsh. Attendance: 19,470.