

Hibs secure fifth place despite narrow defeat to Aberdeen



Hibs finished the 2018/19 season in fifth place despite suffering a narrow defeat to Aberdeen at Easter Road this afternoon.

Paul Heckingbottom made one change to the starting XI that lost to Kilmarnock last weekend with Florian Kamberi making way for Daryl Horgan.

Kamberi was originally listed amongst the substitutes ahead of kick-off but suffered an injury in the warm-up.

In the opening minute Lewis Ferguson tested Ofir Marciano but the keeper did well to save his effort.

Hibs responded and moments later David Gray found Fraser Murray but his deflected effort was saved by Tomas Cerny at

his near post.

The home side continued to attack at pace and both Daryl Horgan and Marc McNulty were denied by good defending.

McNulty in particular was causing the Dons defence problems and he had half-chances in quick succession, a close range shot which was blocked then a glancing header from a Lewis Stevenson cross.

Hibs eventually took the lead in the 25th minute after Mark Milligan found Murray who played a fantastic dinked through ball to McNulty. The on-loan striker calmly slotted the ball past Cerny to the delight of the large home support.

Two minutes later Murray went close with a curling effort from the edge of the area as Hibs totally dominated possession, mounting attack after attack.

Marvin Bartley received a massive round of applause as he warmed up in front of the Famous Five stand and Hibs almost doubled their lead when Stephane Omeonga's cross found McNulty unmarked inside the area. The striker unselfishly tried to find Murray with a cushioned header but the ball was cleared.

Referee Euan Anderson was subjected to a chorus of boos after ignoring a blatant foul on Horgan then just before the break the visitors levelled against the run of play.

Connor McLennan's low cross found Sam Cosgrove who got the break of the ball before slotting it past

Marciano.

Hibs started the second half in style and Murray headed straight at Cerny from close range following a fine cross from Gray.

A superb long ball from Mallan found Horgan on the right wing and the Irishman cut inside and fired agonisingly wide of the post.

Despite Hibs constant pressure, it was Aberdeen who took the lead when James Wilson fired home from close range after good work from Cosgrove and Stevie May.

Bartley replaced Milligan and both received tremendous ovations from the Hibs fans.

David Gray handed Bartley the captain's armband as he entered the field.

The Aberdeen fans were given a new lease of life with the news that Rangers had equalised at Rugby Park and they generated a fantastic atmosphere in the South Stand

The biggest cheers of the day, apart from Bartley's reception was reserved for the referee on the very few occasions that he awarded them a free-kick. The abuse from the home fans however just seemed to make him more determined to give the benefit of any doubt to the Dons.

Hibs refused to give up though and Cerny produced a fine save to deny Gray from eight yards.

The former Hibs keeper then did well to save from Stevenson and then Mallan as Hibs pushed for a late equaliser.

In time added on, substitute Gary Mackay-Steven won a stoppage time penalty kick but Cosgrove's strike was brilliantly saved by Marciano.

After the game Heckingbottom told BBC Scotland: "It was a terrific performance. Everything we did wrong came back to haunt us but everything we did right we didn't get the rewards for.

"We had the full-backs getting forward. I want people chipping in with single figures and more people getting into double figures because that's the way we're going to win games."

Hibernian: Marciano, Gray, Hanlon, Milligan (Bartley 63'), Horgan (Shaw 78'), McNulty, Mallan, Stevenson, McGregor, Murray, Omeonga (Slivka 82'). Substitutes not used: Bogdan, Whittaker, Agyepong, Gauld.

Aberdeen: Cerny, Logan, Shinnie, Considine, McKenna, Wilson, Cosgrove, Ferguson (Devlin 84'), Ball (May 60'), McLennan (Mackay-Steven 78'), Lowe. Substitutes not used: Craddock, Gleeson, Campbell, Ross.

Referee: Euan Anderson.

Attendance: 18,631.