

Remarkable four months for former Hibs' boss Neil Lennon



It's been a remarkable four months for Neil Lennon.

On 30th January, he left Hibs by 'mutual consent' having previously been suspended following a reported 'exchange' with a number of the club's employees.

Hibs then confirmed that Lennon had not been guilty of any misconduct and no disciplinary proceedings had been brought against him. He had not been dismissed nor had he resigned.

At that time Hibs were eighth in the table. He was subsequently replaced by Paul Heckingbottom and Hibs leapfrogged Motherwell, St Johnstone and Hearts to finish in fifth.

A month later Lennon was surprisingly asked to take over at Celtic on a temporary basis after Brendan Rodgers left for Leicester City.

He was a popular choice at the time as during his previous four years as manager he helped to the club to three league titles and two Scottish Cups.

At Hibs he won Championship and led the club to fourth place in the top-flight with their highest number of points.

Since taking over from Rodgers he has guided the hoops to their eighth successive league title and yesterday to a memorable Scottish Cup victory over Hearts.

After the final whistle at Hampden yesterday the Celtic fans sang "There's only one Neil Lennon" as the team celebrated on the field.

Speculation mounted as to who would take charge next season with names such as Rafa Benitez, and David Moyes being spoken of as likely candidates.

Back in the dressing room however, Lennon was approached by club chief executive Peter Lawwell and Dermot Desmond, their largest individual shareholder and after a brief chat he was offered the role on a fulltime basis.

Lennon told BBC Scotland: "It's just a privilege" Peter and Mr Desmond and a few members of the board came in afterwards to the shower area. We had a five-minute chat and they said they wanted to offer me the job.

"It came with massive pressure but I kept it boxed in. I've evolved. I'm older, I had four years away, it was always an ambition to come back and manage Celtic again so I'm pleased this day has come.

"I know people may find this hard to believe but I'm a very good professional. I'm dedicated to my job. I had some lows at Bolton and then two great years at Hibs and I believed in my own ability. Thankfully, so did the Celtic board.

"I never expected to be offered the job. My remit from day one was to win the league and then if we win the cup we get two trophies and that's great.

"At no time did the board swerve from that. We tried our best to maintain the standards Brendan had set over the last couple of years."

Lawwell said "there's no better candidate" after Lennon was offered the job within an hour of full-time at Hampden.

"Neil, in our moment of need, stood up to the plate. Over the next few days, we will work out the details.

"We're absolutely delighted. Fantastic day, fantastic achievement – probably never to be repeated.

"At this point, in terms of looking at the squad, there's nobody that I've worked with who's got a better eye for a player. It's better to do that [offer him the job] tonight to just kill the speculation."

Celtic captain Scott Brown said: "It's phenomenal. It can't get much better.

"We all found out on Twitter and all the lads are diving about in the changing room. We went out, got the gaffer and brought him

back in. The cheer for the manager to get the job – it was phenomenal. He deserves it. It has been a hard one since he came in but he's the only man in my eyes for the job.

“He has had to win two trophies and yet again he has shown that he knows how to win trophies. He's a fantastic man manager and he's been fantastic since he came in. He speaks well and every single one in that changing room loves him.”