

When Hibs put four goals past Barcelona

Liverpool's 4-0 victory over Barcelona last month sent shockwaves throughout Europe.

Not many teams have scored four against the Catalan giants but a Scottish team did, almost 60-years ago and they did it on Spanish soil.



The Inter Cities Fairs Cup was the idea of Swiss pools supremo Ernst Thommen, Ottorino Barassi from Italy and English FA Secretary Stanley Rouss to promote international trade fairs.

During the 1960/61 season Hibs were going through a transitional period following the break-up of the Famous Five, and few outside Scotland gave them any chance of progressing when they were drawn against one of the giants of world football in the quarter finals.

The first leg took place at the newly opened Gran Estadio which had been constructed at a cost of over £1,750,000 and would soon change its

name to the Camp Nou.

Over 50,000 fans were inside the stadium, the majority expecting to see a home victory, but Hibs started brightly and almost took the lead in the opening minutes when Joe Baker just failed to get on the end of a through ball from Sammy Baird.

Joe, in particular was causing the Spaniards problems and he opened the scoring in the 10th minute after a mistake by keeper Antoni Ramallets.

This annoyed the home fans who made their displeasure know by aiming a barrage of jeers in the direction of their own players.

Their mood wasn't helped eleven minutes later when Johnny McLeod made it 2-0 with a superb strike from 20 yards.

Barcelona started to dominate possession and Sandor Kocsis pulled one back with a fine header from an Enric Gensanafree kick but the Edinburgh side went in at the break with a 2-1 lead.

After the restart, Barcelona upped the tempo and Hibernian had to endure a 10 minute period of back to the wall pressure before Kocsis equalised with his second goal of the night.

The partisan home crowd expected a goal blitz however Hibernian fought back bravely and were denied a certain penalty when McLeod was brought down inside the area but the Italian referee waved play on.

Barcelona missed several good chances before Hibernian silenced the home supporters when Tommy Preston fired home a

superb left foot

shot which went in off the post in the 72nd minute.

Three minutes later Baker lost his marker in the middle of the park and hammered in a tremendous 25 yard shot which flew past Ramallets into the net.

Inspired by slow hand clapping from the Barca fans, Kocsis scored his third of the night after a wild scramble in the Hibernian defence in the 84th minute then moment later the visitors were cruelly denied a famous and well-deserved victory when Evaristo de Macido fired home a Kocsis cross to make the final score 4-4.

According to one local newspaper "Hibs didn't hold Barcelona to a draw, it was quite the reverse. Every Hibs man was a hero, none more so than Simpson whose brave performance inspired his outfield colleagues.

"Baird had been a shrewd tactician and the teenage Easton who was making his first European appearance immense but it was the livewire pairing of Baker and McLeod up front that caused the Spanish side most problems.

"In an interview before the game the Barcelona secretary had categorically denied they were interested in buying Baker. Perhaps they had now changed their minds. One local newspaper was in no doubt, urging Barcelona to buy Baker who 'had been so much ahead of our centre forward."

Other Spanish newspapers suggested that Baker's performance had put him in the £100,000 bracket and that he was on Real

Madrid's shopping list as a replacement for Alfredo Di Stefano.

At the after-match banquet, a Barcelona official complemented Hibernian, stating: "We knew we would have a hard game but we were surprised at the standard of Hibs' play."

The scoreline also resounded throughout Scotland. The Scottish Daily Mail said: "Hibs struck a glorious blow for Scottish prestige. They put on a dazzling exhibition. The first hour was unbelievable. It was like watching the Hibs' team of the 1948 era.

The Daily Record reported: "Eleven Hibs' heroes gave Scotland its greatest ever boost. The Easter Road miracle men were close to bringing off the football story of the century. Hibs were magnificent."

Before the second leg however, Hibernian faced Peebles Rovers in the Scottish Cup and progressed to the next round following a 15-1 victory which included NINE goals from Joe Baker. Remarkably his brother Gerry who also later played for Hibernian had scored TEN goals for St Mirren against Glasgow University in the same competition the previous year.

The second leg was another story with Hibs winning 3-2 after a dramatic 90 minutes at Easter Road.