

Hibs qualify for Betfred League Cup last 16 with victory in Highlands



Hibs qualified for the last 16 of the Betfred League Cup with a comfortable 2-0 victory over Elgin City in the Highlands last night but the result came at a cost with Martin Boyle suffering a potentially serious knee injury.

Head Coach Paul Heckingbottom made five changes to the side that defeated Arbroath on Tuesday evening with Ofir Marciano, Steven Whittaker, Darren McGregor, Daryl Horgan and Christian Doidge all returning to the side.

Hibs started on the front foot and almost opened the scoring in the opening minutes when Forian Kamberi's powerful strike from 20 yards flew inches wide.

The visitors were denied a penalty when Christian Doidge

appeared to be fouled by Euan Spark as he contested a corner kick however referee Willie Collin waved away his appeal.

Hibs eventually took a deserved lead in the 10th minute when Collum played advantage after Stevie Mallan had been fouled. The ball fell to Daryl Horgan whose cross was knocked home by Joe Newell from close range.

Hibs continued to dominate and further opportunities and Elgin keeper Thomas McHale did well to deny Kamberi from the edge of the area.

Kamberi should have made it 2-0 when he turned in Doidge's knock down at the back post but incredibly the linesman raised his flag despite the Swiss striker being at least two yards onside.

Ofir Marciano produced a superb save from Rabin Omar to retain Hibs' lead just after the restart then McHale did likewise to deny Mallan from 25 yards.

Hibs continued to press forward in search of a second goal but the hosts looked dangerous on the break and Marciano again did well to save from Kane Hester.

The decisive goal arrived when man of the match Kamberi pounced on a poor pass from Omar to race through on goal and slot past McHale to the relief and delight of the large travelling support.

Horgan, Mallan and Kamberi all had chances to add a third before a late injury picked up by substitute Martin Boyle

meant that Hibs played the final seven minutes with ten men as they had already made their three substitutions.

Boyle hobbled off with an injury to the same knee that caused him problems last season and the management staff will assess the extent of the knock this week.

As Group C winners Hibs join Ross County and Partick Thistle in the knockout stage.

The other five group winners and four best runners-up will be decided this weekend, with 13 games on Saturday and two on Sunday, to join Scotland's four European representatives in the last 16.

After the final whistle Heckingbottom slammed assistant referee Douglas Ross' decision to flag Kamberi's first-half strike offside:

"It was a stinker. It was probably the worst I've ever seen in terms of distance onside. It's a bad one."

Hibs face Newcastle United at Easter Road on Tuesday ahead of their opening league game at home to St Mirren next Saturday.

Elgin City: McHale, Wilson (Willis 77'), Spark, McDonald, Bronsky, Dingwall, Cooper, MacEwan (O'Keefe 59'), Hester, Sutherland, Omar (Loveland 88'). Substitutes not used: McGowan, Ballam, Scott, Dunn.

Hibernian: Marciano, Whittaker, Jackson, McGregor, Mackie, Horgan (Boyle 65'), Vela, Mallan, Newell, Kamberi (Shaw 82'), Doidge (Allan 75'). Substitutes not used: Maxwell, Hanlon, James, Murray.

Referee: Willie Collum.

Attendance: 2,106.