

Controversial late equaliser denies Hibs victory over St Johnstone



Ladbrokes Scottish Premiership – Hibernian v St Johnstone.
Easter Road Stadium, Edinburgh, Midlothian, UK.
24/08/2019.

Pic shows: during the first half as Hibs play host to St Johnstone at Easter Road Stadium, Edinburgh

Credit: Ian Jacobs

Hibs dismal home record against St Johnstone continued today when a controversial late equaliser in the dying seconds denied them all three points at Easter Road.

Head Coach Paul Heckingbottom made four changes to the starting XI that beat Morton last weekend. Ofir Marciano returned in place of Chris Maxwell, Adam Jackson took over from the injured Darren

McGregor, Stevie

Mallan returned from suspension to take Vykintas Slivka's place and Christian Doidge replaced Daryl Horgan.

Former Hibs captain Liam Craig started the match whilst Danny Swanson had to be content with a place on the bench.

The game kicked off in perfect playing conditions and Florian Kamberi linked up with Scott Allan but his powerful strike was deflected past the post.

Hibs almost took the lead in the 9th minute after Doidge robbed Liam Gordon of possession on the edge of the Saints' box before squaring the ball to Kamberi but his first time shot rebounded off the post toward his striking partner who was adjudged to be offside.

Five minutes later Hibs took a deserved lead when Jackson headed Mallan's perfectly flighted free-kick past Zander Clark.

Hibs continued to dominate possession, but the Saints looked dangerous on the break, particularly Matt Kennedy down the left wing.

A mix up in the Hibs defence ended with a booking for Marciano after he brought down Michael O'Halloran on the edge of the area, much to the displeasure of the visiting fans who wanted to see a red card.

In the 53rd minute skipper David Gray was forced to leave the field with an injury following a challenge with Scott Tanner and he was replaced by Steven Whittaker.

Marciano produced a sensational save to deny both Craig's curling effort from 20-yards as St Johnstone pushed for an equaliser.

Hibs should have added a second when Kamberi found Allan who sent a superb through ball into the path of Doidge but the striker's effort was easily saved by Clark.

Daryl Horgan and Vykintas Slivka replaced Allan and Doidge much to the annoyance of the home supporters who let the Head coach know that they disapproved of the decision.

Moments later Saints levelled the scoring when a delightful reverse pass from Craig found O'Halloran who fired the ball high into the net from an acute angle.

Hibs regained their lead with their next attack after Horgan found Glenn Middleton on the left wing and his low driven cross was knocked home by man of the match Kamberi for his 5th goal of the season.

Swanson was introduced and received a warm welcome back from the home fans but it was his cross in the dying second that was headed into the net by Jason Kerr who looked to be in an offside position, sparking wild celebrations amongst the visiting support and booing from the home fans.

After the game Heckingbottom told BBC Scotland: "It's a sickener: the nature of it. One's the last kick of the game and offside and the other is we've lost a runner and made a mistake. It feels like a defeat.

“The goals we conceded there are tough to take. It’s clearly offside.”

Hibernian: Marciano, Gray (Whittaker 55’), Hanlon, Vela, Doidge (Slivka 60’), Mallan, Stevenson, Jackson, Middleton, Kamberi, Allan (Horgan 60’). Unused Substitutes: Maxwell, Newell, Porteous, Shaw.

St Johnstone: Clark, Duffy, Tanser, Davidson, Kane (Swanson 78’), Kerr, O’Halloran, McCann, Gordon, Craig (Hendry 72’), Kennedy. Unused Substitutes: Parish, Callachan, Vihmann, McClean, Denham.

Referee: Don Robertson.

Attendance: 15,315.