

Paul Heckingbottom defends Scott Allan substitution



Ladbrokes Scottish Premiership – Hibernian v St Johnstone.
Easter Road Stadium, Edinburgh, Midlothian, UK.
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Pic shows: during the second half as Hibs play host to St Johnstone at Easter Road Stadium, Edinburgh

Credit: Ian Jacobs

Hibs' head coach Paul Heckingbottom last night defended his decision to substitute fans' favourite Scott Allan during yesterday's 2-2 draw with St Johnstone at Easter Road.

With Hibs leading 1-0 Heckingbottom replaced Allan with Daryl Horgan, a move that sparked a loud chorus of booing throughout the stadium.

Allan had been playing on the right side of midfield rather than his preferred position in the middle which also irritated

the supporters.

Shortly before the substitution however he produced a piece of magic after combining with man of the match Florian Kamberi by sliding a superb through ball into the path of Christian Doidge but the striker's week effort was easily saved.

The booing continued when Michael O'Halloran cancelled out Adam Jackson's first-half opener in the 68th minute but Flo Kamberi restored Hibs' lead 60 seconds later with a deft flick from Glenn Middleton's cross.

St Johnstone then dominated the remainder of the match and equalised in the dying seconds, the third successive game that Hibs have lost a goal in time added on.

The players left the field with boos ringing in their ears.

Heckingbottom later insisted that the apprehension in the stands did not help and defended his decisions.

He said: "We were trying to get the boys to relax but the whole stadium was anxious and that spread to the players.

"We are drawing at home and we will draw many more at home this season, without a doubt. It doesn't help the players, but you could see that we were trying to calm them and tell them to stay calm and relaxed, but anxiety was an issue.

"If the fans can stay calm and if something good does happen, then get behind them."

Asked about the booing following the substitution

Heckingbottom responded: "I didn't know there was a law against taking him (Scott Allan) off.

"No player's going to play 90 minutes every game. I've worked with Scott all week and know what he's been like.

"He's not been at his best in training. He's played 120 minutes last week (against Morton) and was carrying a knock.

"I didn't bring him off because he was injured but he was suffering. That'll happen."

Many Hibs' fans then took to social media to express their anger with a significant proportion claiming to have lost faith in the Yorkshireman and many of his summer signings.

Some compared his reign to the disastrous tenures of Terry Butcher and Colin Calderwood.

New owner Ron Gordon was in the directors' box sitting alongside Leeann Dempster and he witnessed the reaction of the fans toward the head coach.

Hibs' next home game is the Edinburgh derby on 21st September.