

Hibs have to settle for one point after late come-back



Ladbrokes Scottish Premiereship – Hibernian v Ross County.
Easter Road Stadium, Edinburgh, Midlothian, UK.
26/10/2019.

Pic shows: Hibs' left midfielder, Daryl Horgan, scores to put the home side 1 up as Hibs play host to Ross County at Easter Road Stadium, Edinburgh.

Credit: Ian Jacobs

For the fifth successive game Hibs squandered a lead after Ross County came from two goals down to grab a share of the points at Easter Road yesterday.

Head Coach Paul Heckingbottom made two changes to the starting XI that drew with Hamilton two weeks ago with Jason Naismith and Florian Kamberi replacing Tom James and the injured Christian

Doidge.

Scottish Cup winner Liam Fontaine started for the visitors and received a warm welcome from the fans as did goalkeeper Ross Laidlaw.

Hibs started brightly and Swedish midfielder Melker Hallberg struck the crossbar with a superb free-kick before Joe Newell's cross found Jason Naismith at the back post but his strike flew well over.

Laidlaw produced a fine point blank save to deny Kamberi on the half hour mark after a superb through ball from Scott Allan then just before the break Josh Vella's close range shot from Naismith's cutback was deflected just wide.

Daryl Horgan replaced Hallberg who had been booked in the first half and the Irishman opened the scoring within minutes of coming on after he latched onto a pass from Naismith before firing a low drive past Laidlaw from an acute angle.

Hibs doubled their advantage in the 57th minute after Vela won possession in midfield and the ball fell to Allan who cut in from the left and sent a sensational strike into the bottom left hand corner of the net.

That goal sparked a mixture of elation and relief from the Hibs fans looking for their first win since the opening day of the season.

Kamberi almost made it three moments later but his shot struck the post.

County brought on former Hibs' striker Brian Graham for Ewan Henderson as they looked to get back into the game.

With fifteen minutes remaining Graham curled a superb shot

past Chris Maxwell and from then on, the nerves from the players and supporters alike started to show.

Within a minute Graham should have made it 2-2 with a free header from six-yards but his effort flew well wide.

Hibs were unable to keep possession and County mounted attack after attack then in the last minutes Joe Chalmers equalised with a fantastic 25-yard stroke which flew past Maxwell sparking a mass exodus and loud calls for Heckingbottom to go.

The booing continued on the final whistle and the fans let the Head Coach and Board know of their frustration.

Hibs now face Livingston on Wednesday night before meeting Celtic in the Betfred Cup semi-final next Saturday.

After the game Heckingbottom told BBC Scotland: "I'm not going to take any positives out of the game but I also know we're only a couple of results away from changing things.

"You feel the pressure, course you do, pressure to get results. It focuses you, makes you more determined, more driven.

"Speaking to the players in there, you can't hide away from it. Not a chance. You have to face it, work even harder, push, push, push.
That's what myself and the staff will be doing.

"There's one way out of it – wins. That's it."

"It goes to 2-2, all of a sudden it's us pressing. It shows it's a mentality thing, that's what it is. It's not a lack of energy, it's a mentality thing.

“It’s a build-up. It’s fuelling its own momentum. It’s something we have to address.

“There’s only one way to stop it – win. You can’t hope for it to happen, get 2-0 up and think, ‘Blow the whistle’, you’ve got to keep driving and doing what you’re doing.”

Hibs remain in 11th place on eight points, one ahead of St Johnstone who beat Hamilton today.

Hibs: Maxwell, Hanlon, Vela, Newell (Murray 80’), Mallan, Stevenson, Hallberg (Horgan 46’), Naismith, Kamberi, Allan (Jackson 86’), Porteous. Unused Substitutes: Marciano, James, Middleton, Shaw.

Ross County: Laidlaw, Fraser, Kelly, Fontaine, Draper, Gardyne, Mckay, Watson, Spence (Chalmers 72’), Henderson (Graham 63’), Foster (Mullin 72’). Unused Substitutes: Dixon-Hodge, Grivosti, Spittal, Paton.

Referee: Steven McLean.

Attendance: 15,452.